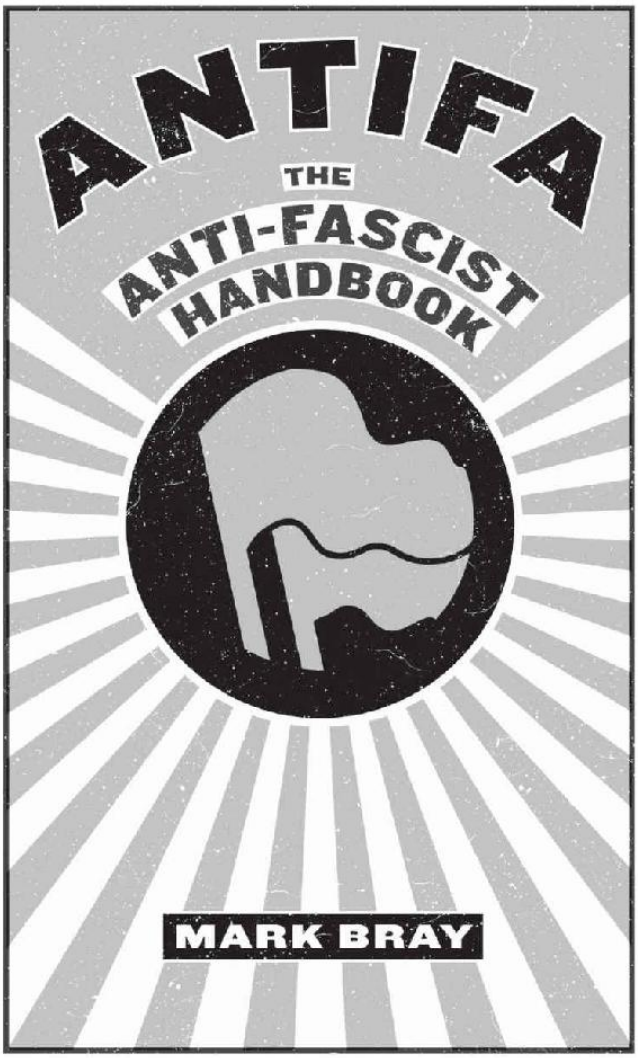
ANTIFA

THE ANTI-FASCIST HANDBOOK

MARK BRAY



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To the Jews of Knyszyn, Poland

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“Fascism is not to be debated, it is to be destroyed!”

—BUENAVENTURA DURRUTI

INTRODUCTION

I wish there were no need for this book. But someone burned down the Victoria Islamic Center in Victoria, Texas, hours after the announcement of the Trump administration's Muslim ban. And weeks after a flurry of more than a hundred proposed anti-LGBTQ laws in early 2017, a man smashed through the front door of Casa Ruby, a Washington, D.C., transgender advocacy center, and assaulted a trans woman as he shouted "I'm gonna kill you, faggot!" A day after Donald Trump's election, Latino students at Royal Oak Middle School in Michigan were brought to tears by their classmates' chants of "Build that wall!" And then in March, a white-supremacist army veteran who had taken a bus to New York to "target black males" stabbed a homeless black man named Timothy Caughman to death. That same month, a dozen tombstones were toppled and defaced in the Waad Hakolel Jewish cemetery in Rochester, New York. Among those resting in peace in Waad Hakolel is my grandmother's cousin Ida Braiman, who was fatally shot by an employer months after she arrived in the United States from Ukraine as she stood on a picket line with other immigrant Jewish garment workers in 1913. The recent spate of Jewish cemetery desecrations in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and elsewhere occurred under the Trump administration, whose statement on the Holocaust omitted any reference to Jews, whose press secretary denied that Hitler gassed anyone, and whose chief advisor was one of the most prominent figures of the notoriously anti-Semitic alt-right. As Walter Benjamin wrote at the apogee of interwar fascism, "*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."[1]

Despite a resurgence of white-supremacist and fascistic violence across Europe and the United States, most consider the dead and the living to be safe because they believe fascism to be safely dead—in their eyes, the

fascist enemy lost definitively in 1945. But the dead were not so safe when Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi described spending time in Mussolini's prison camps as a "vacation" in 2003 or the French *Front National* (National Front) politician Jean-Marie Le Pen called Nazi gas chambers a mere "detail" of history in 2015. Neo-Nazis who in recent years have littered the sites of former Jewish ghettoes in Warsaw, Bialystok, and other Polish cities with white-power graffiti know very well how their Celtic crosses target the dead as well as the living. The Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot cautions us that "…the past does not exist independently from the present…The past—or more accurately, pastness—is a position. Thus, in no way can we identify the past as past."[2]

This book takes seriously the transhistorical terror of fascism and the power of conjuring the dead when fighting back. It is an unabashedly partisan call to arms that aims to equip a new generation of anti-fascists with the history and theory necessary to defeat the resurgent Far Right. Based on sixty-one interviews with current and former anti-fascists from seventeen countries in North America and Europe, it expands our geographical and temporal outlook to contextualize opposition to Trump and the alt-right within a much wider and broader terrain of resistance. *Antifa* is the first transnational history of postwar anti-fascism in English and the most comprehensive in any language. It argues that militant anti-fascism is a reasonable, historically informed response to the fascist threat that persisted after 1945 and that has become especially menacing in recent years. You may not walk away from this book a convinced anti-fascist, but at least you will understand that anti-fascism is a legitimate political tradition growing out of a century of global struggle.

WHAT IS ANTI-FASCISM?

Before analyzing anti-fascism, we must first briefly examine fascism. More than perhaps any other mode of politics, fascism is notoriously difficult to pin down. The challenge of defining fascism stems from the fact that it "began as a charismatic movement" united by an "experience of faith" in direct opposition to rationality and the standard constraints of ideological precision.[3] Mussolini explained that his movement did "not feel tied to any particular doctrinal form."[4] "Our myth is the nation," he asserted, "and to this myth, to this grandeur we subordinate all the rest."[5] As historian Robert Paxton argued, fascists "reject any universal value other than the success of chosen peoples in a Darwinian struggle for primacy."[6] Even the party platforms that fascists put forward between the world wars were usually twisted or jettisoned entirely when the exigencies of the pursuit of power made those interwar fascists uneasy bedfellows with traditional conservatives. "Left" fascist rhetoric about defending the working class against the capitalist elite was often among the first of their values to be discarded. Postwar (after World War II) fascists have experimented with an even more dizzying array of positions by freely pilfering from Maoism, anarchism, Trotskyism, and other left-wing ideologies and cloaking themselves in "respectable" electoral guises on the model of France's *Front National* and other parties.[7]

I agree with Angelo Tasca's argument that "to understand Fascism we must write its history."[8] Yet, since that history will not be written here, a definition will have to suffice. Paxton defines fascism as:

> …a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues

> with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.[9]

When compared to the challenges of defining fascism, getting a handle on anti-fascism may seem like an easy task at first glance. After all, literally, it is simply opposition to fascism. Some historians have used this literal, minimalist definition to describe as "anti-fascist" a wide variety of historical actors, including liberals, conservatives, and others, who combated fascist regimes prior to 1945. Yet, the reduction of the term to a mere negation obscures an understanding of anti-fascism as a method of politics, a locus of individual and group self-identification, and a transnational movement that adapted preexisting socialist, anarchist, and communist currents to a sudden need to react to the fascist menace. This political interpretation transcends the flattening dynamics of reducing anti-fascism to the simple negation of fascism by highlighting the strategic, cultural, and ideological foundation from which socialists of all stripes have fought back. Yet, even within the Left, debates have raged between many socialist and communist parties, antiracist NGOs, and others who have advocated a legalistic pursuit of antiracist or anti-fascist legislation and those who have defended a confrontational, direct-action strategy of disrupting fascist organizing. These two perspectives have not always been mutually exclusive, and some anti-fascists have turned to the latter option after the failure of the former, but in general this strategic debate has divided leftist interpretations of anti-fascism.

This book explores the origins and evolution of a broad antifascist current that exists at the intersection of pan-socialist politics and direct-action strategy. This tendency is often called "radical anti-fascism" in France, "autonomous anti-fascism" in Germany, and "militant anti-fascism" in the United States, the U.K., and Italy, among today's antifa (the shorthand for antifascist in many languages).[10] At the heart of the anti-fascist outlook is a rejection of the classical liberal phrase incorrectly ascribed to Voltaire that "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."[11] After Auschwitz and Treblinka, anti-fascists committed themselves to fighting to the death the ability of organized Nazis to say anything.

Thus, anti-fascism is an illiberal politics of social revolutionism applied to fighting the Far Right, not only literal fascists. As we will see, anti-fascists have accomplished this goal in a wide variety of ways, from singing over fascist speeches, to occupying the sites of fascist meetings before they could set up, to sowing discord in their groups via infiltration, to breaking any veil of anonymity, to physically disrupting their newspaper sales, demonstrations, and other activities. Militant anti-fascists disagree with the pursuit of state bans against "extremist" politics because of their revolutionary, anti-state politics and because such bans are more often used against the Left than the Right.

Some antifa groups are more Marxist while others are more anarchist or antiauthoritarian. In the United States, most have been anarchist or antiauthoritarian since the emergence of modern antifa under the name Anti-Racist Action (ARA) in the late eighties. To some extent the predominance of one faction over the other can be discerned in a group's flag logo: whether the red flag is in front of the black or vice versa (or whether both flags are black). In other cases, one of the two flags can be substituted with the flag of a national liberation movement or a black flag can be paired with a purple flag to represent feminist antifa or a pink flag for queer antifa, etc. Despite such differences, the antifa I interviewed agreed that such ideological differences are usually subsumed in a more general strategic agreement on how to combat the common enemy.

A range of tendencies exist within that broader strategic consensus, however. Some antifa focus on destroying fascist organizing, others focus on building popular community power and inoculating society to fascism through promoting their leftist political vision. Many formations fall somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. In Germany in the 1990s, a debate emerged in the autonomous anti-fascist movement over whether antifa was mainly a form of self-defense necessitated by attacks from the Far Right or a holistic politics, often called "revolutionary anti-fascism," that could form the foundation of the broader revolutionary struggle.[12] Depending on local contexts and politics, antifa can variously be described as a kind of ideology, an identity, a tendency or milieu, or an activity of self-defense.

Despite the various shades of interpretation, antifa should not be understood as a single-issue movement. Instead, it is simply one of a number of manifestations of revolutionary socialist politics (broadly construed). Most of the anti-fascists I interviewed also spend a great deal of their time on other forms of politics (e.g., labor organizing, squatting, environmental activism, antiwar mobilization, or migrant solidarity work). In fact, the vast majority would rather devote their time to these productive activities than have to risk their safety and well-being to confront dangerous neo-Nazis and white supremacists. Antifa act out of collective self-defense.

The success or failure of militant anti-fascism often depends on whether it can mobilize broader society to confront fascists, as occurred so famously with London's 1936 Battle of Cable Street, or tap into wider societal opposition to fascism to ostracize emerging groups and leaders.

At the core of this complex process of opinion-making is the construction of societal taboos against racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression that constitute the bedrocks of fascism. These taboos are maintained through a dynamic that I call "everyday anti-fascism" (Chapter 6).

Finally, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that anti-fascism has always been just one facet of a larger struggle against white supremacy and authoritarianism. In his legendary 1950 essay "Discourse on Colonialism," the Martiniquan writer and theorist Aimé Césaire argued convincingly that "Hitlerism" was abhorrent to Europeans because of its "humiliation of the white man, and the fact that [Hitler] applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and the 'niggers' of Africa."[13] Without in any way diminishing the horror of the Holocaust, to a certain extent we can understand Nazism as European colonialism and imperialism brought home. The decimation of the indigenous populations of the Americas and Australia, the tens of millions who died of famine in India under British rule, the ten million killed by Belgian king Leopold's Congo Free State, and the horrors of transatlantic slavery are but a sliver of the mass death and societal decimation wrought by European powers prior to the rise of Hitler. Early concentration camps (known as "reservations") were set up by the American government to imprison indigenous populations, by the Spanish

monarchy to contain Cuban revolutionaries in the 1890s, and by the British during the Boer War at the turn of the century. Well before the Holocaust, the German government had committed genocide against the Herero and Nama people of southwest Africa through the use of concentration camps and other methods between 1904 and 1907.[14]

For this reason, it is vital to understand anti-fascism as a solitary component of a larger legacy of resistance to white supremacy in all its forms. My focus on militant anti-fascism is in no way intended to minimize the importance of other forms of antiracist organizing that identify with anti-imperialism, black nationalism, or other traditions. Rather than imposing an anti-fascist framework on groups and movements that conceive of themselves differently, even if they are battling the same enemies using similar methods, I focus largely on groups that self-consciously situate themselves within the anti-fascist tradition.

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Since World War II has become the emblematic moral drama of the Western world, "historical" anti-fascism has managed to accrue a certain degree of legitimacy despite being overshadowed by the definitive role of the Allied armies in defeating the Axis powers. Still, with the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini, anti-fascism's raison d'être was widely thought to have evaporated. To some extent, this dismissal of anti-fascism grew out of the Western tendency to interpret fascism as an extreme form of "evil" to which anyone who let down their moral guard could be subject—as opposed to the similarly distorted Soviet bloc interpretation of fascism as "the terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary…elements of finance capital."[15] After 1945 was enshrined as a terminal break with an aberrant period of "barbarism," this individualistic, moral interpretation of fascism discounted the need for political movements to vigilantly oppose far-right organizing. In other words, once fascism was understood almost entirely in apolitical and moral terms, any semblance of continuity between far-right politics and opposition to it over time was rejected.

History is a complex tapestry stitched together by threads of continuity and discontinuity. Elements of continuity are emphasized when they serve established interests: The nation is eternal, gender is unchanging, hierarchy

is natural. Yet, elements of discontinuity are emphasized in the popular memory of social struggle. Once social movements and their leading figures gain enough power to establish their legitimacy, their historical legacies are shorn of their radical tendencies and embalmed in an ahistorical, decontextualizing formaldehyde. For example, as an Occupy Wall Street organizer in New York, I found it a struggle to explain to journalists how the movement was just an extension of the politics and practices of the Global Justice Movement, feminist movement, antinuclear movement, and others. One of the most momentous achievements of Black Lives Matter has been the degree to which its organizers have succeeded in connecting their struggles to the movements for black liberation of the 1960s and ’70s. Of all recent social struggles, anti-fascism faces perhaps the most difficult road toward establishing itself as an extension of over a century of struggle against white supremacy, patriarchy, and authoritarianism.

Anti-fascism is many things, but perhaps most fundamentally it is an argument about the historical continuity between different eras of far-right violence and the many forms of collective self-defense that it has necessitated across the globe over the past century.

That is not to say, however, that the past century of antifascism has been uniform. Interwar anti-fascism differed in important ways from the antifa groups that developed decades later. As I explore in Chapter 1, given the magnitude of the fascist threat, interwar anti-fascism was far more popular. In part that stemmed from a stronger connection between militant anti-fascism and the institutional Left prior to 1945 as compared to the antagonism between the more countercultural antifa of the 1980s and ’90s and “official” governmental antifascism. As we will see, the strategies and tactics of postwar antifa (explored in Chapter 2) have been largely calibrated to potentially resurgent fascist organizing rather than ascendant mass parties. Cultural shifts and advances in communications technologies have altered how anti-fascists organize and how they present themselves to the world. On a material and cultural level, anti-fascism functioned and appeared differently in 1936 than it did in 1996. Yet, the anti-fascist commitment to stamp out fascism by any means necessary connects the Italian Arditi del Popolo of the early 1920s with the anarchist skinhead kickboxers of today.

This element of continuity sustains modern anti-fascism. Over the past decades, antifa have self-consciously adopted interwar anti-fascist symbols like the two flags of the Antifaschistische Aktion, the three arrows of the Iron Front, and the raised-fist salute. A young RASH (Red and Anarchist Skinhead) named Georg from Munich explained to me how he is constantly inspired by memories of resistance figures like Hans Beimler, Sophie Scholl, and Georg Elser that haunt his city's streets.[16] One cannot even pass by an antifa demonstration in Madrid without hearing the 1930s slogans "*¡No Pasarán!*" ("They shall not pass!") and "Madrid will be the tomb of fascism!" The Italian partisan organization ANPI reaffirmed this continuity when it included Davide "Dax" Cesare among its anti-fascist martyrs after he was killed by neo-Nazis in 2003. The slogan "never again" requires us to recognize that if we are not vigilant it *could* happen again. Preventing that from happening, anti-fascists argue, requires us to break anti-fascism out of its historical cage so that its wings can spread out across time and space.

Historians have played their role in cementing the divide between the "heroic" anti-fascism of the interwar period and the "trivial," "marginal" antifa groups of recent decades. Apart from a few works on British anti-fascism in the 1970s and '80s, professional historians have written next to nothing in English on postwar developments.[17] The overwhelming majority of studies on postwar anti-fascism has focused on questions of historical memory and commemoration, thereby implicitly reinforcing the tendency to relegate struggles against fascism to the past. While there is a relatively ample body of German-language literature on anti-fascism in postwar Germany, and a handful of national studies and academic theses on anti-fascism in France, Sweden, and Norway in their respective languages, to my knowledge the only other book on transnational postwar anti-fascism was published in Italian.[18]

Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook is therefore the first book to trace the broad contours of transnational postwar anti-fascism in English and the most comprehensive in its chronological range and scope of national examples in any language. Given the dearth of information on postwar anti-fascism, I have been forced to rely primarily on articles and accounts from the mainstream and anti-fascist press and interviews with current and former anti-fascists. One reason why such studies have not materialized in

the past is the general reluctance of antifascists to risk exposing their identities publicly by speaking with journalists or academics. Most militant anti-fascists operate in various degrees of secrecy to protect themselves from fascist and police backlash. My ability to conduct interviews with North American and European anti-fascists was entirely reliant on the relationships I had established over more than fifteen years of organizing. My radical "credentials" allowed me to tap into anti-fascist networks to speak, often under conditions of anonymity, with sixty-one anti-fascists: twenty-six from sixteen U.S. states and thirty-five active in Canada, Spain, the U.K., France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Russia, Greece, Serbia, and Kurdistan. I also interviewed eight historians, activists, former football hooligans, and others from the United States and Europe about anti-fascism in their countries. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Yet, I do not make any claims toward this being a comprehensive or definitive history of anti-fascism in general nor of the development of national movements in particular. To the degree that it is a history at all, it is an impressionistic history that aims to concisely trace broad themes and developments through weaving together vignettes from seventeen different countries over more than a century. This more modest goal was necessitated not only by the relative lack of sources and scholarly works, but by a tight deadline. This book was researched and written over a relatively short period in order to make its contributions available as soon as possible amid the tumultuous climate of the early Trump era. Therefore, this book is an example of history, politics, and theory on the run. It prioritizes the immediate need to make available the insights and experiences of current and former anti-fascists from two continents over waiting years for more expansive studies. Such works are, of course, vitally necessary and hopefully many will be written in the future that will greatly eclipse what this book has to offer.

Although historians usually attempt to preserve at least the facade of neutrality when analyzing their historical subjects, I agree with the historian Dave Renton that "one cannot be balanced when writing about fascism, there is nothing positive to be said of it."[19] We should be warier of those

who are truly neutral toward fascism than those who honestly espouse their opposition to racism, genocide, and tyranny.

Because of time constraints, I had to limit the book to the United States, Canada, and Europe. It is important to emphasize that anti-fascism has played a crucial role in struggles around the world over the past century. Anti-fascists from around the world journeyed to Spain to fight in the International Brigades. Today there are antifa groups across Latin America, East Asia, Australia, and elsewhere. My choice to omit serious consideration of these groups should not be interpreted as a slight, but rather as a lamentable necessity given a lack of time and the fact that as a historian of modern Europe I turned toward the knowledge and contacts that I had already established. Moreover, my treatment of Europe leans heavily toward western and central Europe despite the fact that some of the most intense anti-fascist struggles of recent years have occurred in the east. Once again this simply reflects the fact that I have more contacts in western Europe and the information that exists on Eastern European anti-fascism in English is fragmentary. Finally, I focus on anti-fascism when fascist or fascistic regimes are not in power (i.e., Italy before about 1926, Germany before 1933, Spain before 1939, etc.). Obviously, the partisan resistance of the 1940s and the guerrilla opposition to Franco over the following decades were the epitome of anti-fascism and are certainly worthy of study. Given limits of time and space, I prioritized analyzing anti-fascism in its preventative stage—that is, when fascism does not have the full force of the state behind it—because that is the situation readers find themselves in today. I regret these constraints and reiterate that hopefully future works will feature more expansive frameworks.

Europe and the United States have witnessed an alarming lurch to the right over recent years in response to the 2008 economic crisis, austerity measures, the strains of an increasingly post-industrial economy, cultural and demographic shifts, migration, and the arrival of refugees fleeing the Syrian Civil War—referred to as the “refugee crisis” by the European right. These factors have fueled the rise of “respectable” far-right parties, such as the French *Front National*, the Dutch Party for Freedom, and the Austrian Freedom Party, and xenophobic formations like Germany’s Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West, known as PEGIDA.

Chapter 3 discusses their rise and the challenges they have posed for antifa organizing.

In the same chapter I discuss the development of the alt-right (alternative right) and the spark far-right politics received from Donald Trump's successful 2016 bid for the American presidency. In just the first thirty-four days after his election more than 1,094 "bias incidents" were reported according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. Hate crimes increased by 94 percent in New York City over the first two months of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016, more than half of which were committed against Jews. Mosques in Texas, Florida, and elsewhere have been set on fire. These attacks grew out of a rise in the number of "hate groups," especially specifically anti-Muslim groups, and "unprecedented outreach effort[s]" by white supremacists to recruit on college campuses.[20] And the list goes on. While eradicating this reactionary hatred will require organizing on all fronts to project an alternative revolutionary vision, in the short term anti-fascists are among those most committed to weeding out racists, anti-Semites, and Islamophobes. As Montreal ARA cofounder Walter Tull phrased it, "the job of the anti-fascist is to make [fascists] too afraid to act publicly and to act as volunteer targets for their hate and attacks which might keep them from thinking about burning down the mosque in their neighborhood."[21]

I subtitled this work *The Anti-Fascist Handbook* because it is a relatively brief, hopefully useful, reference book intended to promote organizing against fascism, white supremacy, and all forms of domination. It is up to the reader to determine the practical utility of this work, but at the very least 50 percent of author proceeds will go to the International Anti-Fascist Defense Fund which is administered by more than three hundred antifa from eighteen countries. After choosing the subtitle, I learned that the London Gay Activist Alliance wrote a pamphlet called "An Anti-Fascist Handbook" in 1979 amid the terror of the National Front. *Antifa* intends to carry the legacy of such practically informed anti-fascist writing forward toward the publication of even more anti-fascist handbooks in the future. I hope *Antifa* will aid and inspire those who will take up the fight against fascism in the years to come so that someday there will be no need for this book.

ONE

¡NO PASARÁN!:

ANTI-FASCISM THROUGH 1945

On the evening of April 23, 1925, a political meeting was scheduled on rue Damrémont in the Montmartre neighborhood of Paris. A meeting such as this was certainly not out of the ordinary for this radical, working-class district, but this was no ordinary meeting. For on this otherwise innocuous Thursday evening the speaker of honor was Pierre Taittinger—the leader of the recently founded fascist organization Jeunesses Patriotes (Patriotic Youth). Taittinger, who would later found the famous champagne company bearing his name, was then in his late thirties and had led a life bearing a number of the hallmarks of the growing fascist movement. Raised in a nationalistic Catholic family, he worked as a clerk before serving with distinction in the First World War. He later gained access to financial and political power when he married the daughter of a well-connected banker. By the 1920s, he found himself at the head of the Jeunesses Patriotes, an organization of more than one hundred thousand members organized into military detachments that paraded to the sound of drums and bugles through the streets of Paris bedecked in blue shirts and Basque berets.[22]

Local communists took the decision to hold the meeting on their turf in Montmartre as what it was: a threat. A number of them managed to get into the meeting and hurl insults and threats at the fascist leader as he spoke, but not enough to derail the proceedings. As Taittinger and his paramilitaries left the venue at around 11:30, he later recounted that “it was a riot atmosphere. A swarming crowd on the sidewalks, clamoring their hate and

anger, bellowing the ‘Internationale’ before a thin line of police who were unable to do much.”[23] They soon found that the streetlights had been smashed to allow a communist squad to lay in wait in the shadows. As Taittinger recalled,

> …Revolver shots crackled: we were caught in an open ambush. Heroic comrades threw themselves before their leader to protect him with their bodies. Two of them fell to the ground… At each street corner, violent fighting erupted. The wounded fell bleeding. [We] retreated toward the Mont-Cenis subway station, carrying our wounded [and] departed by subway.[24]

Four Jeunesses Patriotes lay dead. Thirty more were wounded.[25] The next day the communist *L’Humanité* was entirely unrepentant: “The fascists have reaped what they have sown. The workers will not tolerate anyone defying them on their ground. The experience of Italy and Germany tears too strongly at the heart of all proletarians to allow it to happen again here.”[26]

Communists gunning down fascists for holding a meeting? How did it all come to this? To find the answer, perhaps we need to travel back to 1898, to the height of the Dreyfus affair in France, when tensions hit a breaking point over the case of the Jewish captain Alfred Dreyfus. Several years earlier, Dreyfus had been (wrongfully) imprisoned for allegedly passing military secrets to the Germans. Yet, emerging evidence of his innocence fractured French society between anticlerical, left-wing *Dreyfusards* and anti-Semitic, militaristic anti-Dreyfusards. Among the most notable examples of the latter were three proto-fascist groups: the Ligue antisémitique de France (Anti-Semitic League of France), the Ligue des Patriotes (League of Patriots, parent organization of the Jeunesses Patriotes), and the Ligue de l’Action Française (League of French Action). These leagues were staunchly opposed to Marxism and the parliamentarism of the French Third Republic, fiercely nationalistic, and increasingly able to orchestrate the kinds of rowdy street mobilizations that had been the exclusive preserve of the Left for decades. As the Dreyfusard movement grew, these leagues organized raucous protests in defense of the military

and mobs of thousands that attacked Jewish businesses amid shouts of "Death to the Yids!"[27]

Where there was proto-fascism, however, there was also proto-anti-fascism. Anarchists and members of the antiparliamentary Parti ouvrier socialiste révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party) formed a *Coalition révolutionnaire* to "contest the reactionary gangs in the glorious street, the street of energetic protests, the street of barricades."

And contest them they did. The *Coalition* protected Dreyfusard speakers and pro-Dreyfus witnesses on their way into the courthouse to testify. They plastered the city with posters to reclaim public space from the anti-Semites, and they took the offensive to the anti-Dreyfusards by staging counterdemonstrations and even infiltrating and disrupting a number of large meetings. As it became harder for the radicals to gain entrance into anti-Dreyfusard meetings, the anarchist Sébastien Faure forged invitations to a meeting of the opposition at a local restaurant in Marseille. Unfortunately for Faure, those who arrived with the forged invitations were denied entry, but they went around the side and smashed through a glass door to storm in and disrupt the proceedings.[28]

The next year, in 1899, Dreyfus was pardoned, though he would have to wait until 1906 for full exoneration. Nevertheless, the anti-Dreyfusard leagues, especially Action Française, which historian Ernst Nolte referred to as "the first political grouping of any influence or intellectual status to bear unmistakably fascist traits,"[29] managed to infuse militaristic nationalism with a street-level populism that foreshadowed the fascism of the next century and represented a marked breakthrough for right-wing politics.

While Nolte cites Action Française as the first proto-fascist group, historian Robert Paxton argues that "fascism (understood functionally) was born in the late 1860s in the American South"[30] with the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Paxton points to their distinctive hooded uniforms, methods of violent intimidation, and creation of alternative networks of authority as reminiscent of twentieth-century fascism.[31] In response to Klan violence against black participation in the Union League and the Republican party (and against the black community more broadly) in the 1860s and 1870s, league members boycotted Klansmen, organized armed

self-defense groups, and in some cases even torched the plantations of former slaveholders.[32] Moving into the 1890s, Ida B. Wells launched a significant anti-lynching campaign through her paper *Free Speech* and her groundbreaking pamphlet *Southern Horrors*. Wells, who carried a pistol with her wherever she went, ardently advocated for the right of black self-defense. When a group of African Americans set fire to a town in Kentucky in retaliation for a recent lynching, her paper wrote that they "show some of the true sparks of manhood by their resentment…Not until the Negro rises in his might and takes a hand resenting such cold-blooded murders, if he has to burn up whole towns, will a halt be called in wholesale lynching."[33]

Though they were not entirely unrelated, the historical origins of Italian Fascism and German Nazism, and the revolutionary anti-fascism they produced, can be unearthed by examining a different set of historical precedents from the racialized terror of the United States, beginning shortly after the French Revolution when the European monarchical order was restored in 1815. From that time forward, European revolutionary politics largely revolved around the looming threat of liberal republicanism on the left and the aristocratic defense of traditional monarchy on the right. This conflict exploded with the European revolutions of 1848 in France, Hungary, present-day Germany, and beyond, when republicans and their lower-class supporters took to the barricades to topple the continent's royal regimes and replace them with republican nation-states. At this point, the newly conceived notion of nationalism was largely the preserve of a left that counterposed it to the hereditary sovereignty of Europe's traditional ruling dynasties.

Ultimately, most of the national revolutions of 1848 failed. Yet, as their tragic events unfolded, the developing cleavages between aspiring republican statesmen and an increasingly powerful and revolutionary workers' movement effectively scared many liberals away from revolution into the arms of the traditional elite. As historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote, "confronting 'red' revolution moderate liberals and conservatives drew together." Traditional elites were willing to concede many economic demands to liberals over the following decade in exchange for their abandonment of the revolution.[34]

Yet, the specter of popular upheaval from below forced many conservative elites to take popular politics and the alien liberal notion of "public opinion" seriously for perhaps the first time in history. Foreshadowing elements of twentieth-century fascism, French emperor Napoleon III sought to suppress working-class politics while appealing to the populace through the cultivation of his masculine image. In Germany, Otto von Bismarck used the carrot and the stick by developing a nascent welfare state to deprive socialism of its potential base of support, and by implementing the 1878 Anti-Socialist Laws. A year later, in 1879, the British liberal politician William Gladstone introduced mass, town-to-town electoral campaigning to Europe, reflecting a growing awareness of the power of popular politics. Over time, pressure from below and a growing awareness of the utility of reform from above, led to expansions of the suffrage and limited unionization rights across Europe.

Still, despite these and other reforms designed to appease popular unrest, traditional conservatives and their torpid parties were generally unwilling to seriously countenance a turn toward popular politics. And as the nineteenth century drew to a close, the rapid advance of socialist unions and parties seemed to presage a radical-left dominance of the hearts and minds of "the masses." At the same time, however, there were stark clues that this would not be the end of the story. The 1880s witnessed the creation of a number of organizations in France (such as the aforementioned League of Patriots), Germany, Austria, and elsewhere, primarily with petit bourgeois constituencies that were frequently steeped in the "socialism of fools": anti-Semitism.[35] Caught between the captains of industry and what they saw as the terrifying red hordes of the organized working class, these artisans, clerical workers, and functionaries started to forge their own leagues, associations, and political parties. Moreover, the expansion of imperialism toward the end of the century, evident in the "Scramble for Africa" and the partition of China, among other examples, swung nationalism to the right to forge a powerful bond between rulers and the ruled, based on the international "prestige" of foreign conquest. Conversely, Italian nationalists after 1903 attacked their political elite for their failure to compete in the imperial arena—a frustration that, in 1910, consolidated itself in the creation of the Italian Nationalist Association.[36]

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 exacerbated existing frictions in the European political landscape, opening space for the eventual emergence of fascism. After Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in retaliation for the assassination of the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Germany and the Ottoman Empire joined their side, while Russia, Great Britain, and France were the main powers on the other side of the trenches. For years, the socialist parties of Europe had discussed plans for a massive continental general strike at the outset of war to stop militarism dead in its tracks. When the trumpets sounded, however, most parties fell in line behind their states. A notable exception was the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolshevik) and their fiery leader Vladimir Lenin for whom the conflict was quite simply "a predatory imperialist war."[37] The pro-war stance of the majority of European parties was the last straw for Lenin and the revolutionary left wing of international socialism, which had become progressively estranged from the movement's center.

Doctrinal conflicts had not been nearly as acute among socialists when the Second International was formed in 1889. Back then, the main controversy revolved around the exclusion of the anarchists for their anti-parliamentarism, and their rejection of the role of the party and the state in the revolutionary process (a debate that had divided the First International between the followers of Karl Marx and the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin in the previous decade). Socialist unity would not last long, however. In the late 1890s the German socialist Eduard Bernstein broke profoundly with Marxist orthodoxy by arguing that since conditions were gradually improving for workers, socialism could be achieved gradually through the electoral process without the need for a revolution.

Over the following years, reformist and revolutionary factions emerged in most socialist parties. Their polemics intensified during the war and escalated further after the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917. The excitement stimulated by the Russian Revolution catalyzed the economic and social turmoil embroiling Europe at the end of the war. A revolutionary wave spread across Europe including military mutinies, revolts, strikes, occupations, and the formation of workers' councils in Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy, from the final days of the war through 1920. This upsurge culminated in the formation of Soviet Republics in Hungary in

March and Bavaria in April 1919. Soviet leader Grigori Zinoviev was so optimistic that he remarked, “No one will be surprised, however, if by the time these lines appear in print, we shall have not merely three, but six or more, Soviet Republics. Europe is hurrying toward the proletarian revolution at breakneck speed.”[38]

Zinoviev’s optimism proved premature. The Hungarian and Bavarian Soviet Republics were short-lived, and by the early 1920s the revolutionary tide was ebbing. There are many reasons for the failure of the postwar revolutionary movement, but one not lost on contemporaries was the general predominance of the reformist wing of the socialist movement. This was clearest when, in Germany, Friedrich Ebert, the socialist leader of the new Weimar Republic, sent paramilitary *Freikorps* to put down the communist Spartacist uprising of January 1919. In the process, the *Freikorps*, composed primarily of battle-hardened World War I veterans, murdered communist luminaries Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

The bitter and bloody conflicts that divided international socialism after the war would come to represent formidable hurdles to the achievement of anti-fascist unity over the following decades. Revolutionary communists would never forgive the social democratic “betrayal” of the revolution and the murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. On the other side, Social Democrats came to reject the Bolshevik model of revolutionary dictatorship and resent communist attempts to topple their parliamentary governments. These grievances were further accentuated by the mandate issued at the second congress of the new Communist International (Comintern, or the Third International) in 1920 for the revolutionary factions of socialist parties to splinter off to form new communist parties. Meanwhile, the anarchists, who formed their own anarcho-syndicalist International Workers Association in 1922 representing more than two million workers globally,[39] opposed social democratic reformism. They also protested the 1921 Bolshevik attacks on the Kronstadt sailors and Nestor Makhno’s anarchist army in Ukraine, and the repression of anarchism more broadly in the new Soviet Union.

At the moment when European socialism was at its most divided, its very existence would soon depend upon how it responded to its most formidable challenge yet.

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In late March 1921, Emilio Avon, a local socialist leader in Castenaso outside of Bologna, received a startling letter: “You are the secretary of the Socialist section. We want to test your courage.” The next night, as the Avon family slept, a group of armed men in masks kicked in their door, dragged Emilio outside, and beat him unconscious amid the horrified screams of his wife and three children. Avon was “invited to leave town within fifteen days on pain of death”—an invitation he hurriedly accepted.[40]

Who were these masked men and why were they terrorizing local socialists and their families? These were Benito Mussolini’s Fascist[41] *squadristi*, his Black Shirts, who roamed the cities and countryside destroying the red “plague” that had threatened “national unity” since the end of the war. Class war had broken out in Italy during the *Biennio Rosso* of 1919–1920 as industrial workers occupied factories, peasants seized the land, and strike waves paralyzed the economy. Yet, the preference of the moderate prime minister to negotiate rather than completely unleash the army tested the patience of industrialists and large landowners.[42] The threat of revolution, and the more immediate reality of significantly disrupted production, pushed economic elites to look beyond the “impotence” of the parliamentary government for solutions to their problems. They soon determined that Benito Mussolini was their man.

As the editor of the socialist organ *Avanti!*, Mussolini had pushed for Italian intervention in the First World War—a stance that broke with Marxist orthodoxy and prompted his expulsion from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). Once Italy joined the war, Mussolini served in the military for two years. After a grenade injury ended his military career, he attempted to start a new movement that would fuse elements of his earlier socialism with his growing nationalism and authoritarianism to forge “national syndicalism,” a new ethos of corporatist class collaboration in the interest of the Italian nation. This led to the formation of Fascio di Combattimento (based on the classical Roman symbol of a bundle of sticks surrounding an axe known as *fasces*) in 1919, marking the official birth of Fascism. Its membership included former socialists, some far-right futurists (an avant-

garde cultural trend), and especially veterans of World War I who had been brutalized by the war.

The First World War was a conflict that most had imagined would be short and quick, yet had metastasized into a four-year quagmire of seemingly interminable trench warfare involving innovative tools of death such as machine guns and poison gas. The greatly enhanced technological capacity to produce carnage traumatized so many that the term "shell-shock" was coined to describe what is now known as combat PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Postwar demobilization increased the number of unemployed in Italy to two million, while the cost of living was four times higher than it was in 1913.[43] Yet, for many young men, especially those who would become fascists over the next decade, the "spirit of the trenches" fostered a peculiar kind of solidarity. The founder of the French *Faisceau* recalled that when the war started "we had been returned to a state of nature on an egalitarian basis; each of us had taken his place in a hierarchy spontaneously created or accepted by the new society in which we were placed."[44] From the fascist perspective, true men were risking their lives for the nation in a state of "egalitarian hierarchy," while "effeminate," bourgeois, paper-pushing parliamentarians were living lavishly and allowing communists to destroy the country. Moreover, Italian nationalist soldiers were outraged when politicians failed to fight the Paris Peace Conference's failure to cede territories promised to Italy in the Treaty of London.

Although originally Mussolini's Fascism contained left-wing rhetoric about balancing the interests of the economic elite with those of peasants and workers in the interest of the nation (evident in the Fascist program of 1919), in practice his Fascist Black Shirts brought the war home by militarily targeting leftists in the service of landowners and employers. A favorite pastime of the Fascist squads was to humiliate their opponents by forcing them to drink castor oil. In the first half of 1921 alone, roughly 119 labor chambers, 107 cooperatives, and 83 peasant offices were destroyed. In 1920 more than a million agricultural workers went on strike; the next year that figure dropped to 80,000. By uniting Mussolini's urban squads with a vast, reactionary rural movement, the ranks of the *fasci* swelled from a scraggly group of 100 men in 1919 to 250,000 merely two years later.[45]

The first militant anti-fascist organization to resist Mussolini's squads was the Arditi del Popolo (The People's Daring Ones) founded by the anarchist Argo Secondari in Rome in late June 1921. The entire range of anti-fascist militants (communists, anarchists, socialists, and republicans) were organized together under the Arditi's decentralized, federal militia structure whose symbol was a skull with a dagger in its teeth surrounded by a laurel. Within a few months, the Arditi mobilized 144 sections composed of about twenty thousand members to defend towns and cities against Fascist incursions. Initially the newly formed Arditi won some notable victories. For example, in the northwestern town of Sarzana, *squadristi* had routinely terrorized the local population by destroying union offices and murdering leftists throughout the early months of 1921. Yet, a punitive Fascist incursion into the town in June to avenge the death of a local Fascist was promptly driven off by Arditi sections along with local workers. Twenty Fascists died in the battle.[46]

The Arditi del Popolo were ultimately unable to withstand the Fascist onslaught for several reasons, including the strong financial and material support the Fascists received from economic elites, the fact that much leftist infrastructure had already been smashed by the time the Arditi were formed, and the inability of the Left to cooperate for the destruction of their common enemy. In January 1921, those who sought to follow in the footsteps of Lenin broke with the PSI to form the Italian Communist Party (PCd'I) thinking that the country was on the verge of a revolutionary epoch. Not only did the split divide the two factions, but it slashed their cumulative power—the pre-schism PSI membership of 216,000 was reduced to a combined post-schism total for both parties of 100,000. While the center and right of the new PCd'I sought to work with left-wing socialists, the party's left wing grouped around Amadeo Bordiga refused any cooperation with the PSI. Moreover, several months after the formation of the Arditi del Popolo, the PSI withdrew support as it signed the Pact of Pacification with Mussolini, while the Communist Party pulled its members out of the Arditi, which it called a "bourgeois maneuver." A number of rank-and-file members of both parties stuck with the Arditi, but the Unione Anarchica Italiana (Italian Anarchist Union) and the anarcho-syndicalist Unione Sindacale Italiana (Italian Syndicalist Union, USI) were the only leftist

institutions to maintain support for this armed formation.[47] Apart from the Arditi, coalitions of workers organized a number of anti-fascist strikes throughout 1922 including an attempted general strike from the Alliance of Labor on July 31. The PSI, however, discouraged locally organized strikes in favor of a "strictly legal" general strike that it would orchestrate, and Fascist violence crushed the attempted general strike before it could gain momentum.[48]

In 1924, Mussolini would look back on the "March on Rome" of late October 1922 when he came to power as "an insurrectional act, a revolution…a violent take-over of power."[49] This interpretation reinforced the image of martial valor that he sought to cultivate, but it bore no resemblance to his far more mundane rise to power. The discontent of economic elites after the war was sufficient for the liberal prime minister Giovanni Giolitti to look the other way as Black Shirts terrorized leftist unionists, strikers, and politicians, and to even include the Fascists in his national bloc in the elections of May 1921, where they won 36 of the bloc's 120 seats in parliament. Soon thereafter, Mussolini transformed his movement into the Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party).

But mere parliamentary participation was not enough for Mussolini and his Black Shirts. As the months passed, it became increasingly clear that the Fascists had the support of much of the army and the economic elite while the prime ministers that succeeded Giolitti struggled for governmental stability. In late October 1922, Mussolini engaged in a gamble of "psychological warfare"[50] when he amassed a group of Fascists outside of Rome who threatened to forcibly seize power. Although the prime minister was ready to order martial law to stop the Fascist advance, which certainly would have done the job, King Vittorio Emanuele III refused to approve the decree. Instead, the Fascist leader was invited to form a coalition government. But he demanded sole control of the government, which the king granted him. The march of the Black Shirts on October 31, 1922, was merely a ceremonial representation of their leader's cagey manipulation of a fragmented liberal government.[51]

Socialists and communists were relatively unconcerned with the change of power. The Italian Confederation of Labor was not hostile to the new government, broad anti-fascist fronts did not emerge, and the communist

leader Palmiro Togliatti felt confident that “the fascist government, which is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, will have no interest in freeing itself of any of the traditional democratic prejudices.”[52] Togliatti and the rest of Italy would soon learn that the destruction of “democratic prejudices” was the very essence of Fascism. Months after the “March on Rome,” Mussolini ordered the arrest of the PCd’I Central Committee, sending the party underground and thousands of communists into exile. The Fascist murder of Giacomo Matteotti, leader of the newly independent Unitary Socialist Party, exposed Mussolini’s weakness as the prime minister of a coalition in which his own party was a minority. Yet, leftist forces could not manage to forge a strong enough anti-fascist alliance. Some socialists and communists stormed out of parliament in protest, but the communist leader Antonio Gramsci accused them of being reluctant to move beyond “purely parliamentary terrain.”[53]

Tito Zaniboni, on the other hand, had no such reluctance. On November 4, 1925, this Unitary Socialist Party deputy checked into a hotel room next to Mussolini in order to shoot the prime minister as he gave a speech on his balcony. A phone conversation, however, between Zaniboni and the head of Italian Freemasonry planning the shooting, was intercepted, leading to the arrest of the would-be assassin before he could fire a shot.[54] Mussolini used the attempt as an excuse to end the control of parliament over the government, making him accountable only to the king, and to ban the Unitary Socialist Party and the Freemasons.[55] Three more attempts on the life of Mussolini were made the following year. In April, the Anglo-Irish aristocrat Violet Gibson opened fire at the Italian leader as he was exiting an international surgeons’ congress but the bullet merely grazed his nose. In September, the anarchist Gino Lucetti threw a bomb at Mussolini’s car that injured eight people but not the intended target. Finally, in October a teenager named Anteo Zamboni shot Mussolini, but miraculously the bullet went through his jacket leaving him unharmed. Zamboni was then murdered by an angry mob. Some have alleged that this final assassin was an anarchist, but anti-fascists have claimed that he was actually put up to the task by the Fascists as an excuse for repression. Either way, the assassination attempts were used to eliminate all non-Fascist political parties and journals, thereby inaugurating Mussolini’s dictatorship.[56]

By 1926 Mussolini's potential opponents were either successfully co-opted or smashed. Until the development of partisan bands in the 1940s, resistance to the regime was almost entirely orchestrated from abroad, where exiled militants smuggled underground newspapers and manifestoes or carried out individual attacks on Fascist targets.[57] For a while, at least, Mussolini's regime was on solid footing. All exiled antifascists could do was chip away at his power and organize abroad against the wave of fascism that threatened to engulf the continent.

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The Weimar Republic was born of war and baptized in the fires of the revolution of 1918–19, and the right-wing coup attempt of 1920. The new social democratic government attempted to appeal to the lower classes by incorporating the welfare state into the constitution for the first time in German history, while maintaining the support of the upper classes by staving off communist revolution.[58]

Under different circumstances this may have been enough for the new republic to chart a course of stability, but not in interwar Germany. Right-wing nationalists associated the republic with defeat; a defeat mythologized into betrayal by (Jewish/socialist) civilian politicians rather than failure on the battlefield. They resented having to pay what they considered to be excessive war reparations dictated by the Treaty of Versailles, and longed for a return to traditionalist authority. On the left, the Communist Party (KPD), which broke from the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1919, sought to forcibly topple the republic and institute a proletarian dictatorship. Yet, following the decision of the Social Democratic government to call on the far-right paramilitary *Freikorps* to put down the Spartacist uprising of 1919, subsequent armed attempts by the KPD in 1921 and 1923 failed miserably.[59]

In the 1920s, Germany was awash in paramilitary formations across the political spectrum, such as the independent veterans' organization Stahlhelm, which drifted to the right over the years as it excluded Jews from its membership.[60] In 1924, the social democrats and some centrist parties formed the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold (black, red, and gold being the colors of the new republican flag) to establish a leftist presence

among veterans. By mid-decade it boasted a membership of approximately 900,000. Not to be outdone, several months later the communists formed the Roter Frontkämpferbund (Red Front-fighters' League, or RFB) to compete with the social democratic Reichsbanner and establish a militant auxiliary to the party similar to the "Red Soldiers League" formed in 1918 and the "Proletarian Hundreds" of 1923–1924. By 1927 it had a membership of 127,000.[61]

At this point, the socialists and communists were far more preoccupied with each other than they were with the paramilitary formation that would prove to be the most important of them all: the Sturmabteilung (Storm Troops, or SA) of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or NSDAP). When Hitler formed his new party out of the right-wing German Labor Party, he didn't really bring any innovations to existing right-wing ideology.[62] The mix of militarism, traditionalism, hypermasculinity, anti-Semitism, and anti-Marxism that he set within a social Darwinist framework of national and racial struggle was but a particularly virulent strain of prevailing far-right thought. Even the swastika itself was already "almost a prerequisite for *völkisch* [i.e., right populist] groups" before Hitler adopted it as the new party's logo in 1920. Yet Hitler modernized this ancient "Aryan" symbol by thickening it in keeping with new graphic trends in advertising.[63] This is one example of how Hitler reinvented the ideas and symbols of the Right through imagery, oratory, and organization.[64]

Hitler also reinvented right-wing politics through violence. The Nazi (an abbreviation for Nationalsozialistische) Storm Troops not only emulated Mussolini's Black Shirts by wearing their distinctive brown shirts, they matched the brutality of their Italian counterparts. In March 1927, a group of several hundred SA encountered two dozen members of the communist RFB orchestra and a communist politician that happened to be aboard the same train bound for Berlin. When the RFB greeted them with the communist raised fist salute, the Nazis "regarded this as a provocation." As one Nazi recounted,

> At each of the stations of the journey, we launched a volley of stones at the Communist carriage. Each stone hit home, as the

> fourth-class carriage had no side divisions to it, and its occupants were standing huddled together. Within a trice each pane of glass was shattered. Standing on the steps of the carriage we tried to force our way inside during the journey. From the roof we thrust a flagpole through the windows and caused a lot of injuries.[65]

After the train reached the station, the Nazis left to roam Kurfürstendamm and assault anyone who "looked Jewish." When the police arrived at the train they found over two hundred rocks, a revolver with empty cartridges, and three loose teeth amid "shards of glass, pools of blood, and splinters of wood." The communist politician's face was "a shapeless bloody mess." Six passengers were hospitalized, including two Nazis.[66] Little did these communists know that these were only the opening salvos in Hitler's "war of extermination against Marxism."[67]

While Hitler was planning a war against the Left, socialists and communists focused on combating each other.

In 1928, the Comintern announced that the postwar situation had entered a revolutionary new "third period" that required a strategy of heightened antagonism toward socialists in order to clarify their alleged role in safeguarding capitalism. According to the Comintern, a revolutionary "first period" had emerged at the tail end of the First World War, which had required a similarly oppositional strategy when communists broke off to form their own parties. This period ended as the revolutionary promise of the postwar period faded. As a result, the Comintern changed course to formally adopt a "united front" policy in relation to the socialists on December 18, 1921, as a more stable "second period" set in.[68] The German socialists declined the offer.

The 1928 announcement of the "third period" further damaged relations between the two main factions. From 1928 onward, communists argued that socialists were "social fascists," meaning that social democracy would inevitably be co-opted by the bourgeoisie as they increasingly turned toward fascism to defend their power in the face of working-class upheaval. For the bourgeoisie, the socialists would be the carrot while the fascists were the stick—hence, "social fascists," two sides of the same coin.[69] The

Soviet leader Zinoviev argued that “the leading sections of German social democracy are nothing but a fraction of German fascism with a “ ‘socialist’ phraseology.”[70] In fact, a significant reason for the “social fascist” turn was Stalin’s need to fend off Zinoviev and Trotsky to his right in the ongoing struggle for power in the U.S.S.R.[71] Moscow politics often influenced continental anti-fascist strategy more than Italian or German realities.

The bitterness of the “social fascist” label was accentuated when Berlin’s socialist chief of police banned open-air marches on May 1, 1929. Pressure from the rank and file forced the KPD to defy the ban and stage a protest. Riot police attacked the communists, triggering mass strikes and three days of barricades and insurrection that was only put down when the police went in with armored cars. The clashes left 30 dead and nearly 200 wounded, and 1,200 were arrested. Communist organizations such as the RFB and its youth wing, the Rote Jungfront, were promptly outlawed.[72]

While the socialists and communists were at each other’s throats, Hitler’s NSDAP was growing. Although the failure of the Nazi “Beer Hall Putsch” of 1923 represented a temporary setback for Hitler’s movement, following his release from prison, NSDAP membership grew from seventeen thousand in 1926, to forty thousand in 1927, to sixty thousand in 1928.[73] The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 shattered many Germans’ faith in the ability of the republic to solve their problems. Storm trooper violence escalated at the end of the year as squads started to march through communist neighborhoods and attack their meeting places, their taverns. Communists were finally forced to start taking the Nazis seriously, but they remained defiant. The communist paper *Die Rote Fahne* proclaimed, “Wherever a fascist dares to show his face in the quarters of the working class, workers’ fists will light his way home. Berlin is red! Berlin is staying red!”[74]

This kind of militant opposition to the NSDAP generated significant debate within the KPD over strategy. Much of the KPD leadership advocated opposing Nazism through the mass strikes of organized labor, but the depression had weakened organized labor and the KPD had become the party of the unemployed. Its leadership struggled to adjust to the changing economic circumstances and to calibrate party resistance to a different kind of foe. They supported physical resistance to the Nazis, but advocated

“proletarian mass-terror” rather than “individual actions against individual fascists,” which was implied by the popular new slogan “Hit the fascists wherever you meet them!”[75] Opposition by KDP leadership to the sentiment of this slogan significantly alienated the KPD’s paramilitary formations who lived the daily reality of countering storm trooper attacks. Opposition also frequently broke along generational lines, with anxious youth ready to beat anything in a brown shirt while their older leaders urged restraint. One desperate communist argued, “In my opinion, mass-terror is a sheer impossibility…Fascism can only be held down by [individual] terror now, and if that fails, in the long run everything will be lost.”[76]

The coordinated campaign of the underground RFB against Nazi attacks on communist taverns in the fall of 1931 represented a marked escalation in anti-fascist strategy. For generations taverns had served as local spaces for organizing and recreation for the Left. On the heels of their success in the 1930 election, when the NSDAP became the second-largest party in the Reichstag, the Nazis used the resources of their wealthy backers to essentially buy out local leftist taverns in Berlin and use them as bases of operation in the fall of 1931. When rent strikes and protests failed to dislodge the Nazis, the RFB went into action…

In September, two SA taverns were shot up, resulting in the death of one SA guard. On October 15, the strategy escalated. While a diversionary demonstration was being held a kilometer away, thirty to fifty men started to slowly march toward an SA tavern in the Richardstrasse singing the “Internationale” and shouting “Down with fascism!” Suddenly they stopped, and four or five of them pulled out guns and opened fire on the SA tavern, wounding four and killing the owner, who had joined the NSDAP “for business reasons.” But the action produced a number of arrests, and the SA tavern was up and running again three months later. To the dismay of the military wing of the party, the KPD leadership publicly repudiated such attacks.[77]

Similar debates erupted within the German anarchist movement. Although much smaller than their communist and socialist counterparts, the German anarchist militia Schwarze Scharen (Black Flocks, or Black Troops) was founded in 1929 to protect meetings of the Free Workers’ Union of Germany (FAUD) anarcho-syndicalist union and the Syndicalist-

Anarchist Youth. Outfitted entirely in black with matching berets, the Schwarze Scharen paired their Nazi street-fighting with creative propaganda including puppetry, music, and street theater. (The communists and socialists also had choirs, theater, and various forms of agitprop.) Although their ranks never exceeded the hundreds, in some towns they represented the main anti-fascist opposition.

Nonetheless, their confrontational methods were opposed by some of the FAUD anarchist unionists. As the political atmosphere intensified, the Schwarze Scharen started to store explosives. In May 1932, based on a tip from an informant, their cache was raided. The arrests that followed this discovery, paired with Hitler's rise to power, sealed the fate of the Schwarze Scharen.[78]

The scope of the violence only increased as the years passed. According to their own accounts, from 1930 to 1932, 143 Nazis were killed in the violence, while the Communists lost 171 members. Although the Nazis targeted the communists more than the socialists, socialist deaths spiked as well.[79]

Mounting violence and political turmoil prompted the republican/socialist paramilitary organization Reichsbanner to propose the creation of an "Iron Front" against fascism with the SPD and various labor organizations in December 1931. Apart from the need to mount a more vigorous response to Nazism, the initiative was a recognition that the 1930 shift to "presidential government" by decree, which drained the democratic content of Weimar, necessitated a greater attention to street politics. The SPD was also eager to deflect attention from the party's reluctant acceptance of Chancellor Brüning's fourth emergency decree, which had cut wages and social spending. While the party's priority was to bolster the authority of the government against Hitler, with the Iron Front it sought to "project a new aggressive image at the same time."[80]

The creation of the Iron Front also reflected the frustration of young party members with the stale, didactic nature of their party's propaganda. Hitler, on the other hand, had come to master the psychological element of propaganda. Rather than put forward "reasons" designed to "refute other opinions," he aimed at the "elimination of thought" and the creation of a "receptive state of fanatical devotion" through a dynamic politics of

constant action.[81] The Russian socialist émigré Sergei Chakhotin observed this and advocated that the SPD adopt such psychologically informed propaganda. While walking around town, Chakhotin noticed that someone had drawn a line over a swastika to cover the Nazi logo. This gave him the idea of turning the line into a downward facing arrow. After discussing it with receptive comrades, he turned it into three arrows (*Drei Pfeile*). In his mind, they stood for "unity, activity, discipline," or the SPD, the unions, and the Reichsbanner. He also proposed that the socialists adopt the raised fist salute of the communists (which had actually originally prompted Hitler to adopt Mussolini's Roman salute in 1926).[82]

Still, the socialist leadership remained highly reticent about embracing Chakhotin's innovations and rank-and-file calls for increased militancy. Unfortunately for the party, SPD opposition to innovation had been institutionalized. Since the creation of the republic, the SPD executive had developed increasing control over the party to the point where "leaders held their office indefinitely and hand-picked their successors."[83] And the entrenched leadership objected to the graffiti campaign of superimposing the anti-fascist arrows over the swastika because it was illegal. "We shall make ourselves ridiculous with all this nonsense," they argued—although the three arrows would later become one of the main symbols of anti-fascism. And following the Prussian Landtag election of 1932—when the Nazis surpassed the SPD as Germany's second largest party—the SPD campaigned under the banner of the Iron Front, with fists and arrows flying.

As an electoral vehicle, the Iron Front was rather successful. As a paramilitary formation, it "existed in name only." While Iron Front members participated in some military drills, they were not being groomed as a military force. For many it was "another half-measure." Certainly members of the Iron Front took part in the intense street fighting that left ninety-nine dead over the two months following the decriminalization of the SA, but upon the Nazi seizure of power the "Iron Front had been found to be made of tin."[84]

The popularity of the Iron Front prompted the KPD to form Antifaschistische Aktion (Antifascist Action) as a network of factory cells, neighborhood groups, apartment blocks, and other geographical associations. In the 1980s and '90s, many anti-fascist groups would adopt

the name of this German organization, though the Comité d'Action Anti-Fasciste had adopted a very similar name earlier in 1920s France. In 1930s Germany, Antifaschistische Aktion's local executive boards consisted of representatives of the KPD, the RFB, communist sports leagues and earlier communist antifascist platforms such as the Red Mass Self-Defense (RMSS) and the Kampfbund. Antifaschistische Aktion aimed "to provide a framework in which people from all walks of life could be brought together in loose coalition to fight economic, social, and legal repression, and above all a basis on which Social Democrats and Communists could join in self-defense against the Nazis."[85]

Yet this unity was to occur under communist, not socialist, control. Rank-and-file social democrats were welcomed into Antifaschistische Aktion, but the KPD was still instructing its operatives "to sabotage the Iron Front at every turn."[86]

On January 30, 1933, Reich president Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor. The 1932 socialist electoral slogan of "Smash Hitler, vote Hindenburg!" demonstrated the futility of hoping to stop Nazism through purely electoral means.[87] European governments lurched to the right during the interwar period, but often traditional conservatives imposed authoritarian solutions for economic and political turmoil from above—as in Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, and Primo de Rivera's Spain—without having to turn to fascist populism from below.[88] The German socialists hoped that the presidential governments of the early 1930s would do the same, but ultimately the traditional right thought they could control Hitler by bringing him into government.

The KPD had already considered the authoritarian administrations of the early 1930s to be fascist. In their eyes, Hitler was merely a variation on a theme and his party's inability to follow through on its promises would lead to his prompt ouster.[89] But a few months later, the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act granting Hitler supreme authority. All opposition was forced underground. The socialists organized three thousand militants into the Red Shock Troop, while approximately thirty-six thousand communists participated in the resistance through 1935, but the Gestapo effectively crushed the resistance by the end of the decade.[90] Ultimately the socialists and communists were too preoccupied with each other to recognize that the

Nazis were not simply a new variant of traditional counterrevolution. Both leaderships were too stuck in their ways to rapidly countenance innovative and confrontational tactical options. The entire continent, and its Jewish population in particular, would pay a heavy price for the failure to stop Hitler.

★ ★ ★

Thus, by 1934, Italy and Germany had succumbed to fascism. In England, meanwhile, the fifty thousand Blackshirts of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) were ramping up their anti-Semitism with the support of the *Daily Mail*.[91] For many British leftists and Jews, the time had come to take a stand.

Small fascist groups had emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1920s, such as the Imperial Fascist League and the British Fascisti, but it was the former Labour MP Oswald Mosley who put fascism on the map in Britain. After turning to the right, he formed the New Party in 1931. Mosley's party fared poorly at the polls and struggled to create a public presence amid continual disruptions and attacks on its members. At a meeting in Glasgow, police had to hurry Mosley to safety as he was assaulted with rocks and razor blades. While the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) condemned the violence, their rank and file were well represented among the disrupters.[92]

Mosley's next organization, the British Union of Fascists, met a similar response. When the BUF started to organize in the West End of London in 1933, Jews from the East End set out to shut them down. On April 30, 1933, merely months after Hitler's rise to power, a group of a thousand Jews chanting "Down with the Nazis, down with the Hitlerites!" set upon BUF members distributing propaganda. Six Jews were arrested, some of whom had "seriously pummeled" the fascists.[93] Fearing the rise of fascism, British Jews formed a number of organizations such as the Zionist League of Jewish Youth and the Jewish United Defense Association, purely dedicated to self-defense. Similarly, in 1936, Jewish veterans formed the Ex-Servicemen's Movement Against Fascism (EMAF) "to attack Fascism in its strongholds," and then the Legion of the Blue and White Shirts, which terrified the fascists so much they referred to them as "the storm troops of

Jewry." A generational divide characterized responses to anti-fascist violence. Older Jews tended to criticize those who were "copying the Nazi violence which we loath and detest." Instead, they believed that the goal was to "show the world that the Jew can be as good a citizen as anybody else." Younger Jews tended to argue that "fists can be put to better service than propelling pens."[94]

Other Jews organized against fascism in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), even if they didn't entirely subscribe to its ideas because the communists were said to be "the only ones attempting to take the fight to the fascists."[95] This wasn't entirely true since the Independent Labour Party had shifted toward a combative stance after initially holding joint debates with the BUF. And other smaller leftist groups, such as the Socialist League, were equally oppositional.[96] Less formally organized forms of resistance also emerged among working-class Jewish youth who engaged in "gang warfare," to the point where the *Evening Standard* wrote that "East End Blackshirts are in some real danger of physical violence. There are some streets in Whitechapel…where no Blackshirt could walk at night… without being badly assaulted."[97]

Nevertheless, when it came time to shut down Mosley and the BUF, anti-fascists from a variety of groups (many from none at all) turned up en masse. In September 1934, 120,000 protesters utterly overwhelmed a BUF gathering in London's Hyde Park. Such anti-fascist opposition was not limited to major cities. In the small town of Tonypandy, 36 people out of a crowd of 2,000 that shut down the BUF were arrested on charges of rioting. Legally, the police could only shut down hateful speech if it caused public disorder. Therefore, when anti-fascists caused a disruption, the police had a legal excuse to end the BUF event. Overall, 57 of the 117 public meetings that the BUF attempted to organize in 1936 were either disrupted or prevented by the action of anti-fascists.[98]

The panorama of international anti-fascism was significantly altered over the summer of 1935 when the Communist International made a complete about-face away from its "third period" analysis of "social fascists." The new line called for the adoption of a broad Popular Front to bolster the diplomatic security of the U.S.S.R. given the rise of Nazism. Non-Soviet leftists, who months before had been nothing more than fascists in disguise,

were suddenly invited with open arms into the anti-fascist fellowship. “Bourgeois” liberal parties, which had allegedly been paving the way for fascism to engulf the globe, became bulwarks of the Popular Front. Dissident Trotskyists, who had been critical of the Comintern’s “third period” line, instead advocated a pan-socialist united front. Now Trotsky attacked Stalin for going too far in the other direction with this “opportunistic and patriotic turn” that threatened to “dampen the revolutionary struggle.”[99] Yet, by the mid-1930s Stalin was eager to abandon the “revolutionary struggle” in favor of fortifying the Soviet Union.

In Britain, the already small CPGB had suffered greatly from the heated rhetoric of the “third period.” With the advent of the Popular Front, the party eagerly embraced parliamentary democracy, which until recently had been considered a “counter-revolutionary opiate,” and reached out to the Labour Party. Although Labour declined the invitation, the CPGB continued to cultivate an image of respectability and backed away from adversarial anti-fascist activism. In October 1936, the BUF planned a march through the Jewish East End of London. In response, the Jewish People’s Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism (JPC) and their allies in the EMAF and the Jewish Council of Action distributed a petition to get the march banned that received seventy-seven thousand signatures in two days. When the government refused to ban the procession on the grounds of free speech, the JPC decided to mobilize the community to physically block the march route. The CPGB refused to endorse their “confrontational” protest and instead urged its members to attend a rally in support of the Spanish Republic at Trafalgar Square at the same time. The party even printed a leaflet arguing for “Dignity, Order, and Discipline” rather than active disruption.

The party’s rank and file, particularly its Jewish members, were outraged. They “would oppose Mosley with their bodies, no matter what the Communist Party said.”[100] After sustained protest the party leadership agreed to support the anti-fascist blockade.[101]

On October 4, 1936, several thousand fascists amassed to march through London’s largely Jewish East End. Yet, as one Jewish anti-fascist recalled, “we resolved that under no circumstances would we allow Fascists and their

propaganda, together with their insults and attacks, to come along to our community where our people were living and working in peace."[102]

According to the police, one hundred thousand demonstrators flooded the surrounding streets to prevent the fascists' advance. Half an hour before the march was scheduled to begin, the police charged the crowd with their batons to clear some space for the BUF. After the crowd retreated, leaving several men injured on the ground, the barricades went up. The antifascists on Cable Street turned over a lorry to block the road, while others raided a nearby construction site for materials to add to a mass of mattresses and furniture. A wide range of anti-fascists "from bearded Orthodox Jews" to "rough-and-ready Irish Catholic dockers" defended the barricades with paving stones that had been dislodged with pickaxes. When the police charged the overturned lorry, anti-fascists threw small boxes of gunpowder fashioned into tiny bombs. As the fascists chanted "The Yids, the Yids, we are going to get rid of the Yids," the anti-fascists shouted the Spanish slogan: "They Shall Not Pass!"[103]

Meanwhile the fascists continued to arrive, some of them in cars with nets rather than glass in their windows to mitigate the destruction of anti-fascist stones. Finally, Oswald Mosley arrived half an hour late in an open car protected by Blackshirts on motorcycles. Adoring fascists saluted, while the anti-fascists booed and called them "rats." More and more police arrived, bringing their total up to six thousand, but they were increasingly unable to maintain "order." Rocks and other projectiles such as "half-filled aerated bottles of Lemonade" that exploded when shaken and thrown continued to fly toward the police and the assembled fascists. When the mounted police charged the anti-fascists, a bag of pepper was burst in front of a police horse and marbles were thrown at their feet. Bricks and the contents of chamber pots rained down on them from apartment windows. A still more violent scene unfolded when the crowd attempted to de-arrest someone in police custody.

Thus, before the fascist march could advance, the police were forced to cancel it. Outraged Blackshirts shouted, "We want free speech!" Overall, eighty protesters were arrested and seventy-three police were injured.

The next day BUF attacked the government for having "surrendered to Red Terror." Much of the Jewish community had grown "sick and ashamed

of keeping their heads down," according to one Jewish anti-fascist. And at what would become known as the legendary "Battle of Cable Street," Mosley did not pass.[104]

★ ★ ★

Mussolini's illustrious foreign volunteers, known as the Corpo Truppe Volontarie (CTV), had hit a rut. Literally. After a highly successful *Schwerpunkt* blast through republican lines north of Madrid in the style of the later Nazi blitzkrieg, the highly mechanized CTV had advanced faster than their supply lines could maintain and had hit a snow and sleet storm. Freezing in their tropical uniforms, frustrated with a lack of hot meals and warm drinks,[105] the Italian soldiers started to hear messages broadcast from loudspeakers across enemy lines:

> Italians, sons of our land! You have been sent here, swindled by false and deceitful propaganda, or driven by hunger and unemployment. And, without wanting to, you have become the executioners of the Spanish people…Come over to our ranks: these are the ranks of the defenders of the people, of civilization and progress. We open our arms to you: come with us. The volunteers of the Garibaldi Battalion.[106]

After years of exile, Italian anti-fascists of the Garibaldi Battalion finally stood opposite the legions of Il Duce in open combat on the open plains and rolling hills of Castilla-La Mancha, outside of Guadalajara.

It was March 1937 and the Spanish Civil War was raging. Generalissimo Francisco Franco, the eventual leader of the military rebellion that broke out against the Second Spanish Republic in July 1936, was increasingly desperate to conquer the capital to cement the legitimacy of his authority. Yet, the defense of Madrid had proven far more resilient than he had ever imagined. "*¡No Pasarán!*" the people shouted, they shall not pass. To turn the tide, Franco called upon the forces that Mussolini, like Hitler, had sent to Spain in violation of the neutrality agreement that France and Britain were still conscientiously observing.

To achieve glory in Spain, Mussolini had outfitted a force of 35,000 men with 250 tanks, 180 artillery, and 4 motorized machine gun companies. It was the "most heavily armed and best-equipped force yet to enter the battle."[107]

Yet, their technological advantage evaporated as their vehicles got stuck in the mud outside of Guadalajara and their air support was grounded in flooded airfields. From March 12 to 17, the CTV faced intermittent attacks from a range of forces that included the XI International Brigade (composed of the French Commune de Paris battalion and German Edgar André and Thälmann battalions), the XII International Brigade (composed of the Italian Garibaldi battalion and the Franco-Belgian André Marty battalion), and Cipriano Mera's anarchist militia supported by the republican air force.[108] A trickle of desertions turned into a full-scale collapse on the 18th as the Spanish Republic claimed its first victory of the war. In his capacity as a war correspondent for *The New York Times*, Ernest Hemingway argued that "it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of this battle," which energized international anti-fascism after a decade and a half of continual defeat.[109]

While the Battle of Guadalajara represented a high point in transnational anti-fascist unity, grave conflicts simmered beneath the surface that had plagued the Spanish Republic since its inception. The Republic was proclaimed in 1931, a year after the end of the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–1930), who was strongly influenced by Mussolini.[110] Like the German Weimar Republic, the Spanish Republic spent its brief existence fighting off challenges from the Left and the Right. The Republic's most persistent enemy on the left was the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), which launched the unsuccessful "*tres ochos*" (three eights) revolts of January 18, 1932, January 8, 1933, and December 8, 1933.[111]

Meanwhile, on the right, a fraction of the military launched an unsuccessful coup in August 1932. In 1934, a revolt of socialist miners in Asturias against what they considered a fascistic new right-wing government, was brutally repressed. Starting in 1934, the raised fist salute of anti-fascism started to spread in Spain.[112] After the 1935 Comintern shift toward the Popular Front strategy, the tiny Spanish Communist Party

(PCE), which had only a thousand members when the Republic was proclaimed,[113] formed an electoral coalition with socialists and leftist republicans for the 1936 election.

It was the victory of the Popular Front in the 1936 election that set the pieces in motion for the military uprising that summer. Besides the military, Franco was supported by monarchists, industrialists, and large landowners, the Church, and the Falange—a small fascist party formed in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the son of the former dictator. Over the course of the war, the membership of the blue-shirted Falange grew steadily from five thousand before the war to two million several years later.[114] Franco was not a fascist himself—he was more of an authoritarian Catholic traditionalist—and so he was not beholden to the Falange, but after the war he made the fascist Falange the official state party of his fascistic dictatorship. José Antonio Primo de Rivera, though, had found himself in enemy territory when the war started, and was executed by the Republican government several months later.

While garrisons loyal to Franco achieved rapid victories in some regions, in Barcelona the workers of the anarchist CNT, the socialist UGT, and others took up arms to put down the military revolt and proclaim a social revolution. Over the following weeks and months, anarchists and their revolutionary socialist allies collectivized industry and agriculture across much of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia. About three thousand enterprises were collectivized in Barcelona alone.[115] George Orwell, who arrived in Barcelona amid the revolutionary upsurge, described it as “the first time I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle.”[116]

The Communist Party, however, was resolutely against the unfolding Spanish revolution. The end of the “third period” analysis and the pivot toward the “Popular Front” represented a retreat from revolutionary ambitions in favor of fortifying the U.S.S.R. in the global arena. Moving into the 1930s, the Soviets attempted to strengthen relations with Western powers as the Comintern scaled back the revolutionism of its national parties. When Italy invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1935, the U.S.S.R. issued only a half-hearted protest and implemented a boycott of Italian goods that was less far-reaching than that of France or Britain. After the war in Africa ended, the Soviets lifted Italian sanctions in order to resume an

economic relationship with the fascist regime that stretched back to a 1924 commercial pact with Mussolini. Likewise, the Soviets made five attempts in 1935 to better relations with Hitler's new regime, but the Nazis wanted no more than commercial relations.[117] This foreshadowed the Nonaggression Pact of 1939.

In the Spanish case, this meant that while the anarchists and Trotskyists considered the war and the revolution to be inseparable, the PCE "made themselves the champions of small bourgeois property" by arguing that the time was not ripe for revolution and social upheaval would only hinder the war effort.[118] As these tensions mounted, *antifascismo* came to be associated with the increasingly communist-dominated coalition of middle-class republican and socialist elements who opposed the revolution. In contrast, José García Pradas of the CNT argued that "being antifascist means being revolutionary."[119]

The prestige that the PCE developed stemmed entirely from the important role of the Soviet Union in the conflict. Yet, when the war in Spain erupted, Stalin had to be pushed into action by the Comintern and Communist labor international.[120] Once the Soviet Union came around to actively supporting the Republic, the Comintern organized the International Brigades. Over the course of the war there were between thirty-two thousand and thirty-five thousand anti-fascists involved from fifty-three countries, composed battalions largely organized by regional background, such as the Polish Dabrowski Battalion, the American Abraham Lincoln Battalion, and the Central European Dimitrov Battalion. About five thousand more came to fight in the militias of the CNT and the Partido Obrero Unificado Marxista (POUM) dissident communist party.[121] George Orwell came to fight in the latter. The Soviets also sold military equipment and sent advisors to the Republic. Thus was born the popular image of Stalin defending the Republic against Hitler and Mussolini.

After the fall of the U.S.S.R., however, newly available documents from the Russian State Military Archives led historians Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck, and Grigory Sevostianov to challenge that heroic depiction in their book *Spain Betrayed*. These documents revealed that "Stalin in effect swindled the Republic out of several hundred million dollars in arms deals…through a secret cooking of the account books." Moreover, "many

of the items supplied were ancient and unusable." Since Mexico was the only other country to provide the Republic with material support, Stalin could, according to these historians, use "aid as virtual blackmail" in order to essentially "take over and run the Spanish economy, government, and armed forces."[122]

Meanwhile at home, the Soviet "Great Purge" was underway. Over the course of several years, any Soviet leader who could conceivably challenge Stalin's power was forced to confess to belonging to the "Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center" or some other plot while "millions of others were being arrested and hundreds of thousands killed after trials behind closed doors or with no trials at all."[123]

The purge even extended to Spain, where the Soviet military intelligence unit (GRU) and secret police (NKVD) committed assassinations and kidnappings of prominent anti-Stalinist leftists who were sometimes locked up in secret prisons.[124] The most visible manifestation of this intra-left conflict was the May Days street fighting of 1937, when the communist-backed Catalan police seized the Barcelona telephone exchange which had been under anarchist control. Four days of street fighting ensued as the anarchist CNT and the Trotskyist POUM attempted to defend the gains of their revolution from the attacks of the police and armed communist units. Ultimately the CNT leadership negotiated an end to the conflict in order to avoid the full outbreak of a civil war within the civil war, but this clash represented the end of any pan-left anti-fascist unity that existed during the early months of the war. After fighting for the POUM during the May Days, Orwell snuck out of Spain, not to escape the fascists but to evade the communists who had labelled him and his comrades "Trotsky-Fascist[s]."[125]

All of which is to say Spanish anti-fascism was an uneven patchwork of transcendent unity and sectarian conflict. Ultimately the illusory harmony of the Popular Front fractured under competing interpretations of revolution and anti-fascism. Franco collected the spoils of this disunity, though it is unlikely that anything short of full French or British aid could have prevented a nationalist victory. Still, while Franco and his fascist allies ruled until his death in 1975, the flame of anti-fascist resistance never flickered out in Spain.

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The Second World War erupted after the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939 (though combat in the Pacific Theater had begun earlier). Over the next half decade, the Nazis and their allies killed roughly two hundred thousand Roma, about two hundred thousand “disabled” people, and thousands of homosexuals, leftists, and other dissidents, while Hitler’s “final solution” murdered six million Jews in gas chambers, with firing squads, through hunger and lack of medical treatment in squalid camps and ghettoes, with beatings, by working them to death, and through suicidal despair. Approximately two out of every three Jews on the continent were killed, including some of my relatives.

These, then, are the stakes of the conversation. When we speak about fascism, we must not drift too far away from thinking about the people who collected the hair, the gold teeth, the shoes of those they exterminated. When we speak about anti-fascism, we must not forget that, for many, survival was the physical embodiment of anti-fascism.

This book would have to be much longer to do justice to anti-fascism during the Second World War. At the very least, however, we can briefly conjure the spirits of the scattered resistance cells, the partisan bands, the underground networks, the workers who manufactured faulty weapons, the student pamphleteers of the White Rose, the families who hid Jews in their attics and cellars, the teens of the Edelweiss Pirates who waged “eternal war on the Hitler Youth,”[126] the Dutch strikers of 1941…

Finally let us light a candle for all victims of the Holocaust including those who fell in the uprisings and armed resistance of the camps and ghettoes of Bialystok, Warsaw, Krakow, Bedzin, Czestochowa, Sosnowiec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz.

TWO

“NEVER AGAIN”:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN

ANTIFA, 1945–2003

The image of British MP Mavis Tate flickers onto the screen. “I, as a member of Parliament, visited Buchenwald Concentration Camp with nine others,” she opens. “Some people believe that the reports of what happened there are exaggerated.” Cut to stacks of emaciated bodies in the back of a truck. “No words could exaggerate,” Tate clarifies. “We saw and we know.” A man attempts to shovel out charred skeletons from industrial ovens. “The reality was indescribably worse than the pictures.” After haranguing German “bestiality,” Tate concludes with the ominous admonition: “let no one say these things were never real.”[127]

When the projection stopped in this small theater in northwest London in 1945, Morris Beckman and his cousin Harry Rose filed out into the lobby. Newsreels such as this showed the world a sliver of Nazi terror, but it wasn’t until the 1970s that the Holocaust “began to be perceived by both scholars and the general public as an historical event of major importance.”[128] For Jews like Beckman and Rose, however, the horror could not be more palpable. They knew what postwar newsreels did not say: that most of the twisted corpses on the screen had belonged to adoring Jewish daughters, lovingly eccentric Jewish fathers, tough-as-nails Jewish grandmothers who gave a wry smile every time they recounted surviving

the pogroms of their youth. Beckman and Rose didn't need to hear that from Mavis Tate; they were all too aware. They felt "sick seeing those bodies like skeletons covered with skin."[129]

Both had served in the war, Beckman as a radio operator in the merchant marine and Rose in a unit that had fought behind Japanese lines in Burma. As Jewish veterans, Nazism could not have been more personal. And so, as they walked home from the theater, they could not have been more appalled by what they came upon: a former 18B detainee (in Britain, someone imprisoned during the war for Nazi sympathies) on a platform shouting "Not enough Jews were burned at Belsen!" "I can't believe it," Rose exclaimed. Still in his uniform and medals, he complained to a nearby police officer who "just shrugged his shoulders and walked away." "Well I'll get the bastard!" Rose said. But Beckman held him back, fearing arrest. "Isn't anybody doing anything about it?" Rose pleaded.[130]

The Allied victory in World War II was thought to have marked the definitive end of fascism in history, but, as Beckman and Rose had learned, the story was not that simple. Shortly after the physical destruction of fascist regimes, waves of historical amnesia amplified the prevalence of resistance to Hitler, Mussolini, and their allies, while muffling the truly widespread nature of collaboration. Punishing that collaboration and fomenting European democracy, whether liberal capitalist democracy in the West or "people's" democracy in the East, was encapsulated in the process of "denazification." In the Western occupation zones, a half-hearted process of prosecuting individuals based on questionnaires drew to a close in late 1946 with more than two million cases still open.[131] Many former Nazis and fascists remained in office as the focus of the West shifted away from a brief "moment of antifascist unity" toward the hostility of the cold war moving into 1947.[132]

Before that window of "antifascist unity" closed, European communist parties reached the apogee of their influence as their prominent roles in the resistance and the victory of the Red Army granted them a newfound patriotic legitimacy. Continuing the move away from fomenting global revolution begun in the 1930s, Stalin disbanded the Comintern in 1943, while communist parties supported the Allied elimination of the revolutionary anti-fascist or "Antifa" committees that had popped up in

France, Italy, and Germany, and instead put forward relatively moderate programs of industrial modernization, social reform, and democratization.[133] Denazification was more thorough in the East than the West, but its excessively class-focused analysis of Nazism essentially let the "innocent" workers and peasants off the hook while shifting all of the blame to elites.[134]

Although Britain was never occupied, men like Beckman and Rose returned to shortages of food and fuel, bankruptcy, austerity, and grim reminders of Nazi aerial bombardment.[135] The war effort had forged a broad anti-fascist consensus in British society, yet as the fascists of the 1930s were released from detention and emerged from hiding, they blamed the Jews for the grim state of postwar society. Over the next few years, the members and sympathizers of the fourteen fascist(ic) groups in London and equivalent groups elsewhere orchestrated poster campaigns with slogans like "Jews must go!" and "War on the Jews!" They attacked people in Jewish neighborhoods, attempted to burn down synagogues, and even threw petrol bombs into a Trades Council Meeting.[136] While in the grand scheme of British politics such attacks may have been "fringe activities,"[137] for Jews who were scared to walk out their front door they were quite serious.

Not long after holding back his cousin from attacking a fascist speaker, Morris Beckman and three fellow Jewish veterans came upon an outdoor meeting of the fascistic British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women. That day Jeffrey Hamm, formerly of the British Union of Fascists, was denouncing the "aliens in our midst" who profited while "our boys" fought overseas. The Jewish veterans had enough. This group of four, which included a judo expert formerly of the Welsh Guards, a former RAF pilot, Beckman, and another veteran, spread out into the crowd of sixty. As the judo expert pretended to buy copies of the League newspaper, he suddenly smashed the heads of two fascist stewards together, and Beckman and the others toppled the stage, dispersing everyone. Beckman explained that "the sheer malevolence of the speaker" moved him and his comrades to physically shut down a postwar fascist meeting for the first time.[138]

It would not be the last. This direct action sparked the formation in March 1946 of the 43 Group: a militant anti-fascist organization composed mainly, though not entirely, of Jewish British veterans dedicated to shutting

down fascism through direct action and pursuing legislation against racist incitement. Later, militant anti-fascists would reject the legislative route because of their revolutionary anti-state politics. But the 43 Group was avowedly ecumenical. It was open to "anyone who wants to fight fascism and anti-Semitism." Although the group was named after the number of original members, within a month membership increased to three hundred people, organized into "commando" units that attacked fascist events, an "intelligence" department that collected and organized information, and, later on, a propaganda department, social committee, and a team that published the 43 Group newspaper *On Guard*.[139]

The 43 Group commando units had several methods of disrupting outdoor fascist meetings. If a single member could get through the cordon of fascist stewards to tip over the speaker's platform, the police had a policy of not allowing the fascists to set it up again. With that in mind, the Group organized units of about a dozen into wedge formations that, at an agreed time, would start far out in the crowd and build up steam so that they "could break through many times [their] number of muscular stewards" and get to the platform. If the platform was too well guarded, however, the commandos would disperse in the crowd and start arguments and fights all over, to the point where the disorder led the police to shut down the event. Another method was to "jump the pitch" by occupying the fascist meeting space well before they could set up.

By the summer of 1946, the 43 Group was attacking six to ten fascist meetings per week. Beckman estimates that about a third were disrupted by the Group, a third were ended by the police, and a third continued successfully. After a while, the 43 Group became so popular that locals would join them or even shut down fascist events on their own using similar tactics. With the emergence of the "fucking hard case East End Yids," as the Blackshirts called them, "the keep-your-head-down and get-indoors-quickly mentality had gone for good."[140]

In 1947 Oswald Mosley, who had been imprisoned as leader of the British Union of Fascists, formally returned to lead his followers. Given the disruption that the 43 Group and an assortment of communist, Trotskyist, anarchist, and unionist antifascists had unleashed on outdoor meetings, Mosley started holding his events indoors. When anti-fascists couldn't

break through to disrupt Mosley's first indoor meeting, they hurled bricks and rocks at the fascist stewards guarding the building, though to no avail. After that, though, the 43 Group managed to forge tickets to gain entry to Mosley's appearances, and once inside, they would start heated arguments with those who had the same seat numbers, thereby disrupting and, often enough, ending the proceedings. Thus were more than half of Mosley's indoor meetings shut down. Even when Mosley's new Union Movement held meetings under false names, infiltrators from the 43 Group tipped off the commandos, who would once again disrupt the rallies.[141] A 43 Group infiltrator who became one of Mosley's most trusted bodyguards once let a group of commandos into Mosley's mansion, where they stole a trove of documents showing the close relations between the fascist leader and a number of MPs.[142]

The attacks took a heavy toll on the British fascists (who no longer publicly identified with the term "fascist," given its unpopularity). As Morris Beckman recounted, "we were going to regard [the fascists] as much an enemy as those we had been fighting during the war…We were very disciplined. We had to be. Our job was to put as many fascists in hospital as we could."[143]

The injuries inflicted upon Mosley's right-hand man, Jeffrey Hamm, bear this out. He had his jaw broken at the "battle of Brighton"; he was knocked unconscious by a flying brick as he addressed a meeting in London; and 43 Group commandos, formerly of the Royal Marines and paratroops, assaulted him at his home even though he had a former Nazi SS paratrooper for a bodyguard.[144]

By 1949, the fascist threat had receded. A number of former Mosleyites had even become vocal anti-fascists. In part, this was because "the fierce aggression of the anti-fascists made them depressingly aware that every time they showed their faces they were going to be savagely attacked." For many it was simply not worth it.[145] In 1950, the 43 Group disbanded, believing that their goal of stamping out Mosleyite fascism had been achieved, at least for the time being.

Yet, while Mosley and his Blackshirts were laying low, developments were unfolding that would change the face of Europe forever and provide

fodder for a fascist resurgence. To compensate for labor shortages after the war, waves of immigration over the coming decades from European colonial possessions and newly decolonized countries in the Global South would strongly challenge racialized European notions of citizenship and nationality.

As the first significant wave of migration came to Britain from the Caribbean, fascists and other white supremacists mobilized a “Keep Britain White” campaign by scrawling “KBW” on walls across London. By the end of the 1950s, gangs of “teddy boys” terrorized Caribbean communities who were forced by police indifference or complicity to organize self-defense patrols armed, at times, with machetes, petrol bombs, and Molotov cocktails. At the same time, former Mosleyites formed the League of Empire Loyalists in 1954 to agitate against the unfolding process of decolonization as represented by domestic groups like the Movement for Colonial Freedom, formed the same year.[146] Opposition to decolonization and immigration would become the cornerstones of a far-right resurgence in the postwar period.

In 1959, Oswald Mosley returned from political exile yet again. Over the next few years his Union Movement teamed up with the newly formed British National Party (BNP), which emerged out of the reactionary League of Empire Loyalists, to target the growing anti-apartheid movement. In response to developments like this and the 1962 formation of the National Socialist Movement out of the BNP, the anti-fascist Yellow Star Movement (YSM) was created when, at a Mosley demonstration in Trafalgar Square, anti-fascist organizers handed out yellow stars for anti-fascists to wear as they had in Britain in the 1930s and ’40s in solidarity with German Jews. The YSM soon fractured over the question of violence, as some of the pacifist faction left to join the London Anti-Fascist Committee, and the more militant faction helped create the 1962 Committee, commonly known as the 62 Group, with former members of the 43 Group. Like their predecessors over a decade earlier, the 62 Group assaulted fascist newspaper vendors and forcibly disrupted indoor Mosley meetings. On one occasion, they even dressed up like Blackshirts to sneak into Mosley’s headquarters. Once inside, they stole records and trashed the place. By 1963, Mosley’s Union Movement was forced back out of public view and,

though the 62 Group started to fade, it continued its work over the next decade.[147]

Nonetheless, the racist European backlash against increased immigration was not limited to fascists. In 1968, the Tory politician Enoch Powell delivered his infamous “rivers of blood” speech on immigration. Days after the riots in the United States provoked by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Powell warned white Britons against allowing “the black man [to] have the whip hand over the white man” by permitting massive immigration.[148] Powell’s speech fueled a rising tide of anti-immigrant violence that increasingly targeted a growing (South) Asian community, evident in the origins of the term “Paki-bashing” in the late 1960s.[149]

A key beneficiary of this wave of racism was the newly formed National Front (NF). In 1967 fascists and white supremacists from the BNP, the Racial Preservation Society, and other groups established this new organization in an effort to rebrand their fascist politics to cultivate a broader appeal. In the early 1970s, the NF launched a campaign to “Stop the Asian Invasion” that culminated in a “Send Them Back” march in 1974. While an organization called Liberation (formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom) organized a counterdemonstration, a march of about 1,500 communists, socialists, and other anti-fascists attempted to block the NF. When the police charged the march, an anti-fascist named Kevin Gately was trampled to death.[150]

Gately’s death “was a wakeup call for the anti-fascist movement.”[151] Local and regional “anti-fascist committees” targeted fascist meetings as the National Front gained three thousand new members in 1976 and improved their showing at the polls.[152] While the predominantly white anti-fascist movement was growing, communities of color were also mobilizing against racism. In response to the 1976 murder of a teenager named Gurdip Singh Chaggar, the Southall Youth Movement was formed. Inspired by the Black Power Movement, this radical self-defense organization inspired the development of the Asian Youth Movement with branches across England.[153] Other self-defense groups of the era included the United Black Youth League, Brixton Black Women’s Group, and Blacks Against State Harassment.[154]

This growing movement achieved a significant victory in the summer of 1977 when feminist, gay, lesbian, anarchist, and socialist groups, along with community members of the multiracial London neighborhood of Lewisham, prevented six thousand members of the National Front from carrying out an "anti-mugging" march. As the police attempted to clear a path for the fascist march, a group of "South London Afro-Caribbeans" blocked their advance and a group of leftists charged marchers to grab the NF banner amid "feminist war whoops" and a hail of bricks from a nearby construction site. Once the NF fled, the police attacked the anti-fascists with truncheons, arresting two hundred. For one of the main organizers "Lewisham was our Cable Street [referring to the famous 1936 anti-fascist blockade]…The NF had been stopped, and their ability to march through black areas had been completely smashed."[155] Lewisham prompted the Socialist Workers Party to create the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) later that year, and over the next four years, the ANL became an anti-fascist mass movement of hundreds of thousands that pursued both electoral and direct action to eradicate the menace of the National Front.

Interestingly, these developments occurred amid the explosion of punk rock music across Britain. While punk quickly morphed into a myriad of styles and subgenres, for our purposes the most important to focus on is Oi!, and the skinhead culture it was built upon. Although today most people associate skinheads with racism, ironically the movement emerged when elements of British working-class "mods" encountered Jamaican music and culture in the late 1960s. Originally derived from the figure of the Jamaican "rude boy," the popular and stylish working-class outlaw celebrated in early ska and rocksteady, British skinhead culture was initially a multiracial site of cultural exchange when it emerged in London around 1969.[156] In the mid to late 1970s, skinheads of various races gravitated to the Oi! subgenre of punk, which distinguished itself from the art-school ostentation of bands like the Sex Pistols by forging a direct, "back to basics," anthemic style of masculine, working-class pub-rock characterized by bands like the Angelic Upstarts, Sham 69, and Cock Sparrer.[157] Over time, however, the British punk scene, and Oi! specifically, witnessed the startling growth of a violent white-power skinhead presence fueled by a mid-decade economic plunge and an intensification of National Front recruitment.

To combat the Nazi skins (often called “boneheads”) and the broader wave of anti-immigrant racism in the music industry, evident in Rod Stewart’s claim that “Enoch’s our man” and Eric Clapton’s appeal to “stop Britain becoming a black colony,” the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and their allies created Rock Against Racism (RAR).[158] From late 1976 to 1981, punk bands such as The Clash, X-Ray Spex, and Stiff Little Fingers shared the stage with reggae acts like Aswad and Steel Pulse to create a groundbreaking forum for white youth to appreciate Jamaican music for the first time. While smaller RAR gigs often became battlegrounds as punks and antiracist skins fought off skinhead “Fronters,” the large RAR carnivals influenced a generation of youth with the slogan “NF=No Fun.” White-power skins made a failed attempt to respond with their own “Rock Against Communism.”[159]

Before long, white-power skinhead culture spread well beyond Britain. By 1978, racist skinhead crews developed in the Les Halles neighborhood of Paris. In the early eighties, they attacked punk shows and launched “*la chasse aux Beurs*” (“Arab hunting”), which killed twenty-three people in 1983.[160] This racist violence was fueled by the growth of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s *Front National* (FN) which scored its first electoral success in the 1983 municipal elections. The *Front National* was formed in 1972 by the most important postwar fascist organization, Ordre Nouveau, as a front organization to create a veneer of political respectability in the model of the postwar Italian fascist party Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). They even borrowed the MSI’s tricolor flame logo.[161]

Decades earlier, fascism had found fertile ground in interwar France. Whereas Hitler’s Nazi Party had about 850,000 members out of a population of 60 million when he took power in 1933, the French Croix de Feu, which was only one of four major French fascist organizations, had nearly a million members by 1937 in a population of 40 million.[162] In the 1920s, the major French fascist organizations united to form the original *Front National*, a clear precedent for the later party.[163] Although fascism was discredited after the war, the Far Right remained a “fire beneath the cinders.”[164]

Le Pen was named the *Front National* leader because he was a "moderate" who had not been a member of Ordre Nouveau and could therefore project a mainstream image for the new party. However, Le Pen's formative political years had been spent in the service of Pierre Poujade's short-lived petit bourgeois anti-tax movement of the 1950s and efforts to maintain French control of Algeria moving into the early 1960s. When Algeria won its independence in 1962, Le Pen shifted his focus from protecting a "French Algeria" to preventing an "Algerian France." After the old fascists were expelled from the FN in the late 1970s, Le Pen forged the identity of his party around the "ethno-cultural racism" of the *nouvelle droite* (new right) that opposed immigration in the name of "French national identity."[165]

During the twenty years that passed between Algerian independence and the rise of the FN in the early 1980s, anti-fascism ceased to be a mobilizing force for the French Left.[166] Jean Louis Rançon, a Situationist member of the Sorbonne occupation council in May 1968, explained that the legacy of the Spanish Civil War weighed heavily on the question of anti-fascism for the antiauthoritarian Left. "Never again with them!" was the attitude that libertarian communists had about working with Stalinists.[167] Yet, with the rise of the FN and fascist skinheads in the early eighties, a new generation was forced to grapple with the challenges of anti-fascism.

Inspired by the example of the Black Panther Party in the United States, in 1982 marginalized black youth from the Parisian suburbs formed anti-fascist punk crews to fight back—groups such as the Black Dragons, which had an all-female branch called Miss Black Dragons, and the rockabilly revival squad Black Panthers.[168] The 1983 March for Equality and Against Racism attempted to apply the methods of the American civil rights movement to French antiracism and led to the creation of SOS Racisme a year later. Formed on the margins of the Socialist Party as an NGO-style mass movement, SOS opposed the FN, but also served to deflect attention away from the increasingly anti-immigrant and neoliberal policies of the Socialist government.[169]

In 1985, a multiracial group of radical French punks formed the Red Warriors. One of their members explained "It got to the point where we said: 'It's time to put an end to [skinhead] law. It's time for us to unite as a

gang.’ A radical gang that would not back down, whose doctrine would be radical anti-fascism, and to instill fear in the other camp.”[170] The Red Warriors, each of whom was a champion martial artist, would patrol their neighborhoods looking for skinheads. When they came upon the enemy, they would hop out of their cars wearing reversed bomber jackets (to distinguish themselves from the regular bomber jackets of the white-power skins) and “beat these guys down.” Later in the decade, the multiracial crew the Ducky Boys would refer to such anti-fascist fighters as “skinhead hunters.”

The largely anarchist and Situationist (an avant-garde libertarian Marxist tendency) members of the Red Warriors were also in touch with the anarchist anti-fascist group SCALP (Section Carrément Anti-Le Pen; in English, Section Completely Anti-Le Pen) formed in Toulouse in 1984. SCALP’s aesthetic incorporated the rebellious image of Geronimo and Native American resistance, evident when the group’s members chanted “Le Pen, you’re a fascist! We will SCALP you!” as they bombarded riot police guarding an FN event with molotovs in June 1984. In 1986, anarchist students formed the group RÉFLEX, and their journal *RÉFLEXes* continues to monitor the Far Right to this day. In the 1990s, the clandestine armed-struggle group Francs-Tireurs Partisans (Partisan Snipers, FTP), named after a wartime unit of the same name, blew up FN offices and the homes of FN leaders.[171] Efforts at national “radical anti-fascist” coordination culminated in the creation of the *No Pasaran* network in 1992—a clear homage to the defense of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War.[172] Yet, although French anarchist antifa of the 1980s and ’90s were certainly inspired by the legacy of the Spanish revolution, they were also influenced by innovative “autonomous” strategies and politics emanating from Italy, West Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere in the 1970s and ’80s.

The origins of “autonomous” anticapitalist politics, or *autonomia*, can be traced to postwar Italy, when dissident Marxists who were frustrated with the moderation of the Communist and Socialist Parties started to argue for a renewed focus on the working class, which had, in their eyes, been subsumed in the political exigencies of the parties that claimed to represent it. Influenced by figures like Cornelius Castoriadis, Raya Dunayevskaya, and C.L.R. James, a vision of revolutionary theory “constructed from below

in praxis and social analysis" took shape.[173] Instead of the mammoth Stalinist party, "the autonomous organization of the working class" was, according to Mario Tronti, "the material basis of revolution."[174]

Moving into the 1970s, this developing current of *autonomia* led to the creation of a number of groups, such as Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy) founded in 1973. *Autonomia* formed an ideological backdrop for a broader wave of resistance that included a workers' council movement and other struggles (often led by women) such as rent strikes, squatting, community organizing, and the widespread practice of *autoriduzione* (self-reduction), where those struggling to make ends meet individually reduced prices to levels they could afford. One militant, countercultural faction called themselves Metropolitan Indians in a similar vein to the Native American imagery of SCALP several years later. By the end of the decade, the soul of the autonomous movement was strongly animated by new currents of radical feminism, evident in the first Take Back the Night marches in Rome in 1976, where ten thousand women dressed as witches and chanted "No longer mothers, no longer daughters, we're going to destroy families."[175]

Italian *autonomia* spread to West Germany in the late 1970s where it coalesced with the developing feminist, alternative, antinuclear, and squatters' movements to forge a robust milieu of autonomous squats and social centers.[176] The *Autonomen*, as these militants of all genders were called, rejected the "stale" traditions of the Left. Instead they sought to "practice different forms of life in the here and now." "We fight for ourselves," one autonomous journal explained in 1982, "We do not engage in representative struggles. We do not fight for ideology, or for the proletariat, or for 'the people.' We fight for a self-determined life."[177]

In practice, the *Autonomen* actually did engage in popular struggles. For example, on several occasions they occupied the construction site of a nuclear facility in Bavaria as part of a successful, massive campaign that encompassed tens of thousands of people.[178] Yet, fundamentally, German autonomous politics were about developing prefigurative forms of non-hierarchical self-management, which then forged the world they sought to create through unmediated direct action. That direct action took a number of forms, but one of the most spectacular was the tactic known as the black

bloc, where *Autonomen* dressed in black with their faces covered by motorcycle helmets, balaclavas, or other masks to create a uniform, anonymous mass of revolutionaries prepared to carry out militant actions, sometimes involving weapons such as flagpoles, clubs, projectiles, and Molotov cocktails. Although the Italian *autonomi* and other groups such as the fierce Japanese *Zengakuren* had used similar street tactics, the distinctive style of the black bloc of the *Autonomen* would spread throughout autonomous and anarchist political movements around the world over the following decades. The black bloc tactic featured prominently when the German autonomous movement was forced to defend itself and others from a Nazi resurgence in the mid to late 1980s.

But to set the scene: Following the war, the West German state was founded as an expressly anti-fascist institution. At least on the surface, consensus reigned regarding the horrors of Nazism among all political parties. Yet, as the next generation came of political consciousness in the 1960s, many young radicals were appalled at the shortcomings of denazification and the failure of their parents' generation to fully come to terms with the Nazi legacy.

Later in the decade, fears of encroaching fascistization within the West German government were aggravated by the police murder of the young protester Benno Ohnesorg at a large demonstration against a visit by the Shah of Iran in 1967. At a meeting later that night, Gudrun Ensslin, a future founder of the Red Army Faction (RAF) proclaimed, "This fascist state means to kill us all…Violence is the only way to answer violence. This is the Auschwitz generation, and there's no arguing with them."[179] Fears were aggravated by the failure to prosecute the officer who shot Ohnesorg and the passage of the "emergency laws" in 1968.[180] Some have argued, however, that the "incessant invocation" of the specter of fascism by the Left diluted its rhetorical value.[181]

Anti-fascism would not resurface in a meaningful way in West Germany until the 1980s, such as when in 1985 the antifascist Günter Sare was killed by a police water cannon at a demonstration in Frankfurt against the far-right National Democratic Party (NPD), provoking riots in several cities. The next year, a group called Revolutionary Anti-Fascists—Fire and

Flames (“fire and flames” was a popular *Autonomen* chant) firebombed a barn that was set to host a birthday party for Adolf Hitler.[182]

The period also saw the birth of an important new publication when *Antifaschistisches Infoblatt* was started in the spring of 1987 in Berlin. It continues to this day as an informational periodical somewhat in the vein of the French *RÉFLEXes*, the British *Searchlight*, or the Dutch *Kafka*. Its first several issues, which were published in German and Turkish to include Berlin’s large Turkish community, featured the logo of the communist Antifaschistische Aktion of the early 1930s. Yet, whereas the original logo featured two red flags, representing communism and socialism (though the KPD was still hostile to the SPD), the *Infoblatt* logo featured a red flag in front of the black flag of anarchism/autonomism. The logos of the late eighties featured flags flowing from left to right like those of the 1930s, but by the early nineties the logo was reversed with the flags flowing from right to left as they typically have in anti-fascist logos ever since, and some logos featured two black flags.

Nazi violence exploded in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and across Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. With the total collapse of the Soviet bloc, fascists in the region attempted to capitalize on anticommunist sentiment. In Germany, skinheads tapped into the nationalist euphoria that was building toward reunification. Skinheads and their far-right allies went to war against immigrants, foreigners, leftists, homosexuals, and others. In 1991, they attacked a refugee hostel in Hoyerswerda injuring thirty-two. The next year, thousands applauded as racist thugs hurled rocks and firebombs at an asylum house for migrants in Rostock. Nazis killed at least eighty people between 1990 and 1994. The Far Right was investigated for twenty-three thousand crimes in 1993 alone. Black members of the American national luge team were assaulted by Nazi skinheads, while an exhibition on Jewish persecution was firebombed that same year.

This racist violence found significant social support as the neo-fascist party Die Republikaner received nearly a million votes in 1990. Christian Democratic chancellor Helmut Kohl did little to calm tensions when he proclaimed that “Germany is not a country of immigration.” The entire criminal justice system facilitated this racist terror as skinheads were

merely slapped on the wrist (members of a group who murdered an African immigrant were only sentenced to two to four years), and Amnesty International issued a report accusing the police of committing serious abuses against migrants.[183]

The *Autonomen* emerged as the main force of militant opposition to this racist violence. Often combating Nazis and the police alongside Turkish youth, the burgeoning autonomous antifa movement shut down a Nazi rally in front of the Reichstag and a number of celebrations for Hitler's hundredth birthday on April 20, 1989. In 1990, a bloc of 2,500 antifa behind banners that read "Never Again Germany" and "Shut up Germany—That's Enough," confronted a thousand Nazis commemorating the anniversary of the suicide of Rudolf Hess. About a week after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the anti-fascist Cornelia (Conny) Wessmann died at a demonstration in Göttingen when riot police chased her into an oncoming car. In retaliation, her comrades in thirty cities unleashed a coordinated wave of targeted property destruction against department stores, banks, and government buildings—appendages of the capitalist state responsible for her death in their eyes.[184]

Shortly before the fall of the wall, the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) ongoing neo-Nazi problem had flared up in the mid-1980s. Ironically, the state's anti-fascist identity made officials loath to consider skinhead attacks on foreigners and punks as anything more serious than apolitical "hooliganism." The acknowledgment of a Nazi problem would have undermined the state's legitimacy. Therefore, self-defense and resistance fell to the marginalized punk scene. In 1988, Halle punks made a "skinhead annihilation commando" composed of armed members trained in martial arts. Early the next year, East Berlin punks and other dissidents came across an issue of *Antifaschistisches Infoblatt*, and were inspired to launch Autonome Antifa Berlin (Ost).[185]

It should be noted that in East Germany and throughout the Soviet bloc, Western music was already classified as propaganda. For example, according to the U.S.S.R., The Clash were officially promoters of "violence," Canned Heat were promoters of "homosexuality," Donna Summer was a promoter of "eroticism," and Black Sabbath were promoters of "violence, religious obscurantism."[186] Therefore, the prospect of militant

punks challenging the anti-fascist credentials of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) prompted police harassment, surveillance, and repression. Nonetheless, a few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was originally justified as an "Antifascist Defensive Wall" when it was built in 1961, a group of thirty antifa snuck into an SED rally and unfurled a banner reading "Warning! Neo-Nazis in the GDR" and "Nip this danger in the bud!"[187]

After the fall of the wall, broader German anti-fascist coordination became possible. A number of groups came out of this wave of organizing including the Autonome Antifa (M), or AA(M), which formed in Göttingen in early 1990. (The M stood for *Mittwoch*, or Wednesday, which was the day of the week the group met.) AA(M) distinguished itself from most other more insular autonomous antifa groups by pursuing coalitions with the Left, giving interviews to the press, and organizing an agitprop project called "Art and Struggle."

Efforts at broader coordination, in fact, led about a dozen groups including AA(M) to form a horizontal network called the Antifaschistische Aktion/Bundesweite Organisation (Antifascist Action/National Organization, AA/BO) in 1992, which lasted until its dissolution in 2001.[188] Meanwhile, migrant antifascists organized in Antifa Gençlik from 1988–1994. Antifascist women started to create feminist antifa groups, called "fantifa," in response to the prevalent machismo and patriarchal behavior of their male counterparts. The first such organizing attempt occurred in 1985, but it was really the late 1980s and early 1990s when feminist antifa groups first emerged. Twenty-five fantifa groups participated in more than a dozen national meetings in the nineties. Women's demonstrations, women's blocs at larger demonstrations, and women's congresses, became common in the movement.[189]

During the same period, autonomous antifa were also looking to forge international connections. One of the most important groups it reached out to was the British Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), which had been formed in 1985 by a coalition of groups including, The Jewish Socialists' Group, local antiracist organizations, anarchist groups like Class War and the Direct Action Movement (DAM), the *Searchlight* editorial team, and Red Action.[190] The latter group was created by the "Squadists" of the Anti-Nazi

League (essentially its shock troops) when they were unceremoniously purged from the Socialist Workers Party in 1981 as the ANL ended.[191] Over the following years, Red Action, whose battle cry was “We are the REDS!,” continued to fight it out with fascist skinheads at punk shows and on the streets. After the formation of AFA, Red Action took a leading role in organizing against the Nazi record label Blood and Honour (B&H), which was formed in 1987 by Ian Stuart, the frontman for the most infamous Nazi punk band of the era, Skrewdriver. B&H developed an international distribution network to peddle records and merch from Nazi bands, such as Brutal Attack and No Remorse—whose band T-shirts read “One day the world will know Adolf Hitler was right.”[192]

In Britain, free speech laws and the international prestige of British white-power punk drew skinheads from across Europe to London. To fight back, AFA put pressure on local shops and pubs that accepted Nazi business or sold their goods by organizing petitions and pickets. When that didn’t work, more persuasive methods were employed—such as when two men in balaclavas demolished the storefront of a B&H shop with sledgehammers before destroying the Nazi merchandise with acid.[193]

As Stuart explained, “we have to advertise our gigs by word of mouth. If they (AFA) get to hear about it they want to turn it into a bloodbath.” Therefore, rather than publicizing the location of a Nazi show, organizers would secretly disseminate a meeting point where skinheads would converge to learn the location of the venue. In May 1989, a hundred AFA militants showed up at the “secret” location in Hyde Park an hour before the Nazi meetup and laid in wait. When small crews “from every country in Europe,” but mostly from Germany, started to show up, “they were hunted relentlessly.”

Similar scenes unfolded in the legendary “Battle of Waterloo” in 1992 when AFA attacked Nazi skinheads on their way to a Skrewdriver show. Stuart, who once wrote a song called “Dead Paki in a Gutter,” fared no better himself. On a regular basis, anti-fascists broke bottles over his head as he walked down the street, smashed his fingers with hammers, and convinced local businesses to shun him. Eventually he felt he had no choice but to move.[194]

When AA(M) got in touch with British anti-fascists in the mid-nineties, tensions emerged over differing views on anti-fascism. Despite shared revolutionary socialist politics, militants in the German AA(M) were appalled by what they viewed as the class reductionism of the AFA members who journeyed to Göttingen to meet them for a large demonstration. As one of the founders of the AA(M) remembered, "There had been a discussion about the relationship between patriarchy and fascism…[The male AFA delegate] tried to cut this question with the comment 'this would be as important as the question of whether someone eats beef or is a vegetarian.' " On the other side, the AFA delegates were disdainful of the influence of anarcho-punk culture on the German scene and preferred to march in "normal" attire, referred to as a "casuals" look, rather than join the AA(M) in a large black bloc.

More fundamentally, however, as the two organizations continued discussions over the coming years, the AFA grew befuddled by the argument put forward by the predominantly middle-class AA(M) that the working class was largely irrelevant to the anti-fascist struggle. Instead this German group's politics were informed by anti-imperialism and feminism.[195]

After several attempts at more formal international coordination, including the short-lived European Anti-Fascist Infos Network, the first international conference of militant anti-fascism was held in London in October 1997. Delegates represented twenty-two organizations from France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Ireland, Denmark, Spain, the United States, and Canada. Objections arose when the almost entirely male British delegation, who believed that anti-fascist strategy should be developed "through the prism of *class* rather than race," argued that propaganda should be catered primarily toward the white working class, the potential popular base of fascism, rather than the marginalized victims of fascism. At the end of the conference, only nine of the twenty-two visiting groups joined the new International Militant Anti-Fascist Network, including AFA Hannover and R.O.T.K.A.P.C.H.E.N. from Germany, the Anti-Fascist Platform Zaragoza, Toronto Anti-Fascist Forum, and Minneapolis Anti-Racist Action. The AA(M), which did not join the new International, harshly criticized AFA for their allegedly narrow focus

on physical confrontation. The near collapse of AFA a few years later, when its member groups declined from twenty-five in 1999 to fewer than five a year later, led to the end of the International.[196]

An Argentine anarchist named Luís who arrived in Göttingen in 2003 was eager to join the legendary AA(M). That turned out to be more complicated than he expected. At the time, German anti-fascism was swept up in the debate over the Zionist *Antideutsche* position that had emerged with reunification and grown in intensity by the end of the nineties. The *Antideutschen* argued that given the historical legacy of the Holocaust, German anti-fascists were obliged to lend their nearly unwavering support for Israel. The pro-American stance of the *Antideutschen* solidified after 9/11 and support for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Luís's grandparents were German Jews who had fled the Nazis in the 1930s, but he maintained a strongly anti-Zionist position. Therefore, he was recruited by the anti-Zionist "anti-imperialist" faction of the AA(M). Yet, tensions had escalated so completely within the group that neither faction would approve the admittance of someone sympathetic to the other side. The *Antideutschen* blocked Luís. This conflict led to the split of the AA(M) in 2004. Luís joined the new group formed by the "anti-imperialist" branch called Antifaschistische Linke International, which still exists.[197]

Still, the increasing portability of the militant antifa model was perhaps far more important than the longevity of specific organizations. In the late eighties, antifa spread across Europe to many countries, including Austria, Switzerland, and Sweden. For example, in Oslo, Norway, the punks of the Blitz autonomous house formed an affinity group called Anti-Fascist Action to defend themselves from Nazi skinheads such as the Boot Boys, Viking, and Anti-Antifa, which carried out a series of bombings during this era. In 1992, antifa and immigrant youth organized together to prevent a Nazi march through the town of Gjøvik. Although the Left parties simply encouraged people to stay inside that day, this antiracist coalition mobilized a major street presence that intimidated the Nazis into canceling. In 1994, the Anti-Fascist Action affinity group became a formal network of the same name with chapters in various cities using the now standard antifa flag logo. Like their continental counterparts, Norwegian antifa were largely

anarchist/autonomist, though with some traditionally Marxist elements, and linked to punk and countercultural currents.[198]

In 1995, Norwegian anti-fascists learned that a new *nazihouse* had been established in the city of Sandaker. When attempts to persuade the owner to boot out his new tenants failed, four to five hundred antifa converged on the house. As the front entrance was guarded by the police, Nazis targeted the antifascists with slingshots and shot flares, threw bottles of gasoline, and even heaved a molotov. The anti-fascists retaliated by throwing rocks, but they could not break the police line. Nevertheless, after a while police suspicion of the *nazihouse* grew to the point where they raided the space and arrested seventy-eight people for weapons possession. This finally convinced the owner to terminate the lease. By the next year, the Norwegian anti-fascist movement, which by then had collaborated fruitfully with unions and some Left parties, started to see a marked decline in Nazi activity. By the end of the decade, the legitimacy of antifa organizing influenced public opinion to transcend the earlier tendency to equate fascists and antifascists as equivalent "extremists." Following the murder of a fifteen-year-old black antiracist in 2001 by three Nazis, huge mobilizations and public backlash essentially eliminated overt fascism in Norway through to the present day.[199]

In the Netherlands, meanwhile, militant antifa grew out of the self-defense of the Dutch *Autonomen*, known as *kraakers*, when landlords recruited fascists and football hooligans to attack squatters in their buildings. Between 1968 and 1981, squatters had occupied more than ten thousand houses and apartments in Amsterdam alone. The squatters had great popular support because of the shortage of affordable housing, but by the eighties new laws and harsher police measures threatened the squatting movement. In 1985, the police illegally evicted a woman and her child from a squat. When the *kraakers* re-squatted it for her, the police shot one of the squatters and then brutally beat thirty-two arrested *kraakers*. The next morning one of them, Hans Koch, lay dead in his cell. In retaliation, *kraakers* attacked police stations and government buildings and incinerated police cars in three nights of rioting. Meanwhile, another wing of the movement called RaRa (Anti-Racist Action Group) waged a successful

campaign of firebombings against Makro supermarkets to get the company to divest from apartheid South Africa.[200]

In the eighties, the anti-fascist *kraakers* confronted events held by the neo-fascist Centrum Partij, but the stakes were raised with the creation of the neo-Nazi CP'86 and other armed-struggle Nazi groups, which were modeled on the English Combat 18 group affiliated with Blood and Honour. Influenced by the formation of the German AA/BO network, in 1992 Dutch anti-fascist groups formed a national AFA network. Its most significant groups were based out of Amsterdam, Utrecht, Nijmegen, Leiden, Groningen, and The Hague. AFA militant Job Polak wrote that AFA "can really pride itself on being one of the most important factors to keep the 'organised' extreme right during the '90s small and under pressure…[this] helped the paranoia and infighting under the various fash groups spiral even further out of control."[201]

In Italy, the militant antifa organizing model, with its flags and organizational specificity, actually did not emerge until the late 1990s, though the anti-fascist struggle dates back much further. Although the Constitution of 1948 outlawed the reformation of Fascist parties, the "neo-fascist" Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) emerged from the ashes of Mussolini's regime in 1946. By 1953, the MSI had become the most significant European radical-right party, winning 5.9 percent of the vote. While its gradual move toward the center helped its electioneering, it also alienated the movement's militant wing. A number of splits occurred over the coming years, such as the departure of Ordine Nuovo (New Order) from the MSI in 1956 and the departure of the even more militant L'Avanguardia Nazionale (National Avant-Guard) from Ordine Nuovo in the sixties. Starting in 1969, these and other fascist groups such as the Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei) launched an insurrectionary "strategy of tension" (with CIA backing) to destabilize Italian society and foment a desire for a fascist renewal to bring order. On December 12, 1969, three bombs injured eighteen in Rome, while an explosion at the Piazza Fontana in Milan killed seventeen and wounded another eighty-eight. Although fascist responsibility for the bombings was evident, the police arrested two anarchists, including Giuseppe Pinelli who police threw to his death out the window of the police station. Similarly, fascists bombed an

anti-fascist rally in Brescia in 1974 killing eight and wounding a hundred. The finale of this era of fascist violence came with the attack on the Bologna train station in 1980 that killed eighty.[202]

Fascist violence and the broader Marxist analysis of fascism as integrally linked to the capitalist system led the Italian revolutionary Left to fuse the anti-fascist and anticapitalist struggles. For example, for the Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades), an active armed-struggle communist organization known for kidnapping and executing former PM Aldo Moro in 1978, attacks on the management of major capitalist enterprises were conceived of as broadly anti-fascist actions as much as their assassination of two MSI members in 1974.[203] Apart from covert armed actions, Italian revolutionaries were more than willing to engage in militant street action. Anti-fascist street demonstrations featuring members of groups such as Autonomia Operaia and Lotta Continua often gathered as many as three to four thousand militants wearing ski masks and bandannas, armed with clubs, iron bars, Molotov cocktails, and sometimes handguns. While the expressed purpose of such marches may have been opposition to fascism, the state and the entire capitalist system were implicated in fascist violence, and therefore legitimate targets for widespread looting and property destruction. By the late 1970s, the popular slogan “Iron bars in ’68, in ’77 the P38 [handgun]” reflected the escalation of tactics of the autonomi in a low-intensity “three-way fight” between the revolutionary Left, the state, and armed fascists during the “years of lead.” Although left-wing violence during this era has often generated more attention, fascists were actually responsible for most of the political deaths that occurred from 1969 to 1980.[204]

In the 1980s, fascist violence declined in Italy, while repression and a heroin epidemic wreaked havoc on the revolutionary Left. In the late eighties and early nineties, however, the white-power skinhead scene arrived in Italy. In Milan, the most vicious group of this era was Azione Skinhead composed of Inter football hooligans. In 1990, these skinheads attacked and set fire to a squatted anarchist social center called Laboratorio Anarchico. In retaliation, anarchists and autonomists tore apart the local skinhead bar and “put many Nazis in the hospital.” Soon thereafter authorities banned Azione Skinhead.[205] Militant anti-fascism was organized out of the groups and assemblies of autonomous social centers, but during

this period there were no exclusively anti-fascist formations apart from SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) groups.

While the threat of fascist skinheads declined in the mid-1990s, the specter of governmental fascism escalated as Silvio Berlusconi invited the MSI, which soon rebranded itself as the Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance), to form a government with him in 1994. It was "the first time in postwar Europe an extreme right party, while still imbued with fascist nostalgia, had become members of a cabinet."[206] Berlusconi also included the populist, anti-immigrant Lega Nord (Northern League), which was originally a regional defender of northern interests when it was founded in 1989 but has subsequently morphed into a broader party with national aspirations. In so doing, Berlusconi legitimized the MSI, which was now benignly considered "post-fascist," and contributed toward the rehabilitation of Mussolini's legacy. Berlusconi's sympathy toward fascism was clear years later when he claimed that "Mussolini did not murder anyone. Mussolini used to send people on vacation in internal exile."[207]

As the MSI entered government, its more militant wing broke off to form Fiamma Tricolore (Tricolor Flame). Over the next few years, other parties and organizations emerged to the right of the "post-fascists" such as Forza Nuova (New Force) and CasaPound, whose members started to terrorize migrants, queers, and leftists. By the late nineties a specifically antifa movement had started to grow. In 1999, Milan autonomous anti-fascists turned out in force against Forza Nuova's first public event in the city, which featured fascist representatives from across the continent. The Italian autonomist and former AC Milan ultra Niccolò Garufi recalled how he and his comrades converged on the event's police protection from two directions down a narrow street hurling molotovs. As they pushed back the police, a large group of Veneto Front Skinheads charged the anti-fascists, but they were soundly beaten. Garufi credits this anti-fascist direct action with stifling the growth of Forza Nuova in Milan because their opening event was "in a fortress," where their leaders could not reach the people. For Garufi and his comrades, "direct action is the only argument they can understand."[208] Yet, anti-fascist resistance could not entirely forestall the advance of fascism.

Garufi felt this personally on March 16, 2003, in Milan when two fascist brothers and their father (whose dog was named “Rommel” after the Nazi general) attacked a group of his comrades with knives. Garufi’s best friend was seriously injured, another comrade was stabbed twenty-seven times but survived, and Davide “Dax” Cesare—an anti-fascist, punk, metal worker, Muay Thai fighter, husband, and father involved in ORSO (Oficina della Resistenza Sociale, operating out of a squatted social center)—was killed. (Garufi pointed out that it was the same day Rachel Corrie was killed by an Israeli bulldozer.) When Garufi and his friends arrived at the hospital they were beaten up by the police.[209]

As a boy, Garufi and his communist father always participated in the local partisan tour on the April 25, Italy’s Liberation Day commemorating the end of the war. Every year the group laid wreaths of flowers at plaques commemorating the resistance. After Dax’s death, the official partisan organization ANPI (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d’Italia) agreed to his comrades’ request to include him among their martyrs. Now anti-fascists of all generations leave flowers at the site of his death every April 25th. As the anti-fascist graffiti says, “*Dax vive!*”[210]

Mural for fallen antifa Dax in Milan by WolksWriterz.

★ ★ ★

The white-power skinhead culture of Skrewdriver and the National Front crossed the Atlantic and found fertile ground in the United States and Canada in the late 1980s. Yet, whenever this new fascist counterculture spread, the growing model of militant antifa was right on its heels.

We can locate its North American emergence in a Minneapolis pizza parlor where a crew of multiracial, antiracist skinheads called the Baldies were gathered over Christmas break in December 1987. Earlier in the year, a local group that sported Nazi insignia and called themselves the White Knights started to terrorize African Americans and threaten leftists. The Baldies decided to fight back. A black skinhead in their crew named Mike threw a brick through the window of the White Knight leader's house; he was arrested and fined two hundred dollars.[211]

Deciding to put more thought into their strategy, the Baldies huddled together over pizza to chart a course forward. While reading British anarchist periodicals like *Class War* and *Black Flag*, a sixteen-year-old Baldie named Kieran had learned about the newly formed Anti-Fascist Action. Tales of physically confronting the white-power "Fronters" spoke to these young skinheads, but the word *fascism* "sounded like a dogmatic leftist term" in the American political climate. As a result, the Baldies decided to call their new formation Anti-*Racist* Action (ARA).[212] In their first newsletter, ARA described its activities as:

> 1) EDUCATION: LEAFLETS, STICKERS, POSTERS, LETTERS, ZINES.
>
> 2) DIRECT ACTION: SPRAY PAINT, CROWBARS, BRICKS.
>
> 3) CONFRONTATION: YOUR DECISION.[213]

Over the following months, Minneapolis ARA pressured record shops to stop selling racist music, organized a demonstration with a black student group and a mainly white progressive organization where they painted over

Nazi graffiti, mobilized against police brutality, and confronted the White Knights wherever they found them. As Kieran explained to the punk magazine *Maximumrocknroll* in 1989, “One of the reasons why the Baldies won so much isn’t because we’re on some macho trip or that we’re all huge people but because we’ve been able to get the numbers to support us and that’s what’s most important.”[214]

When the Baldies were first confronting white-power skins, they only knew about the British AFA model. As their organizing expanded however, they got in touch with a variety of antiracist formations in the area that had existed for years, including the Center for Democratic Renewal. Initially called the Anti-Klan Network, the Center for Democratic Renewal emerged out of the outrage following the acquittal of the Nazis and Klansmen who gunned down five Communist Workers’ Party members and injured ten more at a 1979 anti-Klan rally in Greensboro, North Carolina. The police were conspicuously absent as they opened fire. The shooting, which was caught on camera, came to be known as the “Greensboro Massacre.”[215] ARA also learned from former members of the “new communist” Sojourner Truth Organization and October League, as well as the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee (JBAKC).[216] The JBAKC was formed in 1978 by former members of the Weather Underground, the May 19th Communist Organization (named after the shared birthday of Malcolm X and Ho Chi Minh), and other groups after Black Panther prisoners informed them that the head of the New York State guards union was a Klansman. The JBAKC was designed to be an antiracist and anti-imperialist formation for white revolutionaries to work alongside people of color. Their early newspaper *Death to the Klan!* quoted Malcolm X as saying “We need allies who will fight and not tell us to be nonviolent. If a white man wants to be an ally, just ask him what does he think of John Brown. Do you know what John Brown did? He went to war.”

As their use of the quote suggests, the JBAKC promoted physical opposition to the Klan. In 1983, they helped organize a counterdemonstration of 1,200 people who confronted the KKK amid a hail of rocks. By the late eighties the group had about three hundred members organized in thirteen cities across the country. By that point, the name of its newspaper had changed to *No KKK—No Fascist USA!* which they took

from the punk band MDC (and which has since become the most popular anti-Trump chant: *No Trump—No KKK—No Fascist USA!*) The JBAKC folded in the nineties.[217]

The John Brown Anti-Klan Committee had developed out of broader traditions of militant resistance to white-supremacist terror epitomized by the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, and black nationalism more broadly as well as the Brown Berets, Young Lords, Young Patriots, and other similar formations. While the political lens of these groups was shaped far more by anti-imperialism than a specifically anti-fascist tradition, the Black Panthers frequently called the police "fascist pigs" to highlight the hypocrisy of the American anti-Nazi self-image maintained while the police were terrorizing the black community on a daily basis. And there is an element of continuity between the raised fist of anti-fascism and black power. Militant self-defense against white-supremacist violence can, of course, be traced back further through Malcolm X, the Deacons for Defense and Justice, the writings of Robert F. Williams, and other individuals and groups, extending for hundreds of years. While it is accurate to cite the origins of European-style militant antifa politics in the United States with ARA, it is crucial to situate ARA within a much longer and deeper struggle against a wide variety of Klansmen, hooded or otherwise.

The older members of the JBAKC and the Center for Democratic Renewal were excited about this sudden upsurge of antiracist organizing, as Minneapolis Baldie Kieran recalls, but they also shared some "legitimate" concerns—such as the presence of an excessive machismo, while others urged the young skinheads to pay more attention to community organizing.

As ARA grew, these problems were improved upon, but such challenges have faced many militant anti-fascist groups in one form or another. The growth of ARA initially occurred when the Baldies toured with the local band Blind Approach and met like-minded skinhead crews such as SHOC (Skinheads of Chicago) and Milwaukee's Brew City Skins. Antiracist skinhead culture had been bolstered by the visit of Roddy Moreno, singer of the British Oi! band The Oppressed, to New York City in 1986. On that trip, he told New York skins about SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), which he had formed in Britain several years earlier.

Subsequently, the first SHARP group formed in New York in 1987 and over the following years, SHARP and similar groups like RASH (Red and Anarchist Skinheads) spread throughout the punk scene. These informal connections were magnified when *Maximumrocknroll* ran a feature on ARA, and immediately, letters poured in from around the country.[218]

One of the early antiracist punk crews developed in Atlanta, where shows had come to regularly feature "people literally sieg heiling with swastika tattoos." "Some of us got sick of it," an Atlanta anti-fascist named Iggy remembers, and "started out trying to create a culture that was not hospitable to them." At first, Iggy and his friends simply stood outside local venues with flyers that read "Nazis not welcome here." Over time, they learned community organizing from older 1960s radicals and became the "unofficial youth group" of the local Neighbors Network on its anti-Klan campaign. Iggy and his fellow punks worked hard to clean up the Nazi graffiti sprayed around the Five Points area and started fights with any members of American Front or Old Glory Skins who passed through. After a while, skinhead groups started to bring their new recruits wearing Hammerskin T-shirts down to Five Points to prove themselves by confronting the antiracists. By 1993 to 1994, however, antiracist organizing had largely eradicated any consistent Nazi presence in the Atlanta punk scene. Iggy recalls one of the last times he saw someone walk into a show wearing a No Remorse shirt (a Blood & Honour band). Without ARA militants having to act, a "black skinhead punched him four times, knocked him out, and dragged him outside by his feet completely unconscious." "Wow," Iggy recalled, "we completely made it so that these people are not accepted."[219]

As ARA thus spread across the United States, Canadian antiracist skinheads fought back against Aryan Nations violence in Edmonton by forming the Anti-Fascist League in 1990. After fascists attacked a journalist and anti-fascists who were putting up posters, the group organized a demonstration outside of the skinheads' house. When the boneheads came out with illegally modified shotguns, they were arrested by the police. Similar antifa groups emerged, such as United Against Racism in Winnipeg, and the Toronto Anti-Racist Action, formed in 1992.

Over the following years these groups confronted the neo-Nazi Heritage Front and organized First Nations solidarity campaigns. In 1994, the Midwest Anti-Fascist Network was established. The next year it became the Anti-Racist Action Network. By this point, ARA was expanding beyond its roots in the punk scene to encompass a wider and more diverse array of several thousand activists organized in over two hundred locations across the United States, Canada, and South America. Politically, ARA was predominantly anarchist and antiauthoritarian, as reflected in the influential role of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, though there were also Trotskyist, Maoist, and other Left members as well.

As the ARA membership expanded and diversified, so too did its range of activities. ARA chapters defended abortion clinics against Christian fundamentalist attacks (support for "reproductive freedom" was one of ARA's four points of unity), organized cop-watch patrols, protested against police brutality, conducted Palestine solidarity campaigns, and supported the imprisoned Black Panther Mumia Abu Jamal.[220]

Yet ARA continued to "go where they go" by confronting major Midwest Klan rallies in the 1990s and opposing other groups like the World Church of the Creator and the National Alliance when they were competing for power within the white-power movement in the early 2000s. In January 2002, the white-supremacist World Church of the Creator made its bid for movement leadership. Its leader, Matt Hale, organized an event in a largely black and Latino neighborhood of York, Pennsylvania, in solidarity with nine white men, including the town's former mayor, who had just been charged with the murder of a black preacher's daughter in the town's 1969 race riots. Testimony recounted how the mayor had handed one of the defendants a rifle with the instructions "kill as many niggers as you can."[221] In 1999 a World Church member had killed two people and wounded nine more in a series of drive-by shootings targeting Jews and people of color.[222] ARA organizers traveled to York in advance to meet with immigrant-rights organizers and help rally local support for the counterdemonstration.[223]

As Hale spoke to a group of seventy inside the town's library, a crowd of his supporters, including Baltimore Hammerskins waving Nazi flags, were separated from antiracist counter-protesters by a line of riot police. As a young anarchist from New Jersey named Howie recounted, the antiracists

were lobbing snowballs at the Nazis. When the police attempted to shift their line, a hole opened up and the antiracists burst through, triggering a melee. The Argentine anarchist Luís (who would join the German antifa movement a few years later) had journeyed to York with his comrades from the Boston local of NEFAC (North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists). He recounted how "we managed to build a spontaneous tactical alliance with local young kids of color from the neighborhood" who showed the antiracists an alleyway to go around the police to reach the fascists as they were leaving. Masked antiracists busted the windows and lights of the Nazis' cars, and police struggled to respond to "pitched street fights." One Nazi plowed into a group of antiracists with his pickup truck, carrying one of them on its fender for nearly twenty feet. Twenty-five people were arrested, including the truck driver. According to Murray from ARA Baltimore, "the community and ARA united together in running the fascists out of town."

The fascists organized several more smaller rallies in York to compensate for their defeat. "The appearance of being strong and powerful" is important to them, Howie explained, "they couldn't quite look at themselves the same way in the mirror after they got the shit kicked out of them by a 110-pound vegan girl." After the demonstration, Howie and his comrades created New Jersey Anti-Racist Action based out of New Brunswick.[224]

In August 2002, the white-supremacist National Alliance made its bid for movement leadership by planning the biggest white-power gathering since World War II in Washington, D.C. As the Nazis marched with banners reading "Diversity is Genocide for the White Race," members of ARA, NEFAC, and the Arab Anti-Nazi Bloc "dogged the parade from beginning to end."[225] Earlier that day, however, ARA members and their allies had developed an audacious plan to prevent a sizeable number of white supremacists from even making it to the demonstration. Learning that a group of about two hundred fascists were planning to gather at a Baltimore Travel Plaza and take chartered buses into D.C., a plan was to make "efforts to try and stop their transportation," one antifa named Howie explained to me.

That morning the antiracists met at a rendezvous point and split into two groups with the plan to converge on the Baltimore Travel Plaza, where the buses were scheduled to arrive. Howie's group was "a little confused" about the plan and unsure of where the other group was. Some in his group advanced, while he remained behind with one of the cars. As he describes it, twenty-eight antiracists advanced toward the plaza amid a torrential rainstorm only to find that the buses had already been smashed up.[226] According to a knowledgeable source:

> About an hour before the scheduled demonstration, a busload of neo-Nazis from Detroit pulled into the Travel Plaza. Varying reports describe what happened next: a small mob garbed in black charged the neo-Nazis. Only a few boneheads had gotten off the bus, and those that did were attacked. The bus took most of the damage, having its windows smashed, tires slashed, and the interior pepper-sprayed. As quickly as they came, the attackers fled the scene, leaving behind a banner that read "Smash Hate."[227]

Once the antiracists realized that the buses had already been attacked, "every cop in the city" descended upon them. As the police headed over to search their cars, Howie hid under the car. Given the heavy rain he managed to avoid arrest. His twenty-eight arrested comrades, who came to be known as the "Baltimore Anti-Racist 28," were initially charged with the bus attack, but eventually everyone was released since they had arrived long after the fact.[228]

Nonetheless, some American antiracists paid the ultimate price for their militancy during this era. In 1998, a white-power skinhead woman lured two ARA skinheads (one black, one white) named Daniel Shersty and Lin "Spit" Newborn into the Las Vegas desert, only to encounter the rest of her crew who fatally shot them in cold blood.[229] "Dan," his father said, "died as a soldier who believed in his cause—antiracism."[230]

★ ★ ★

It is unsurprising that the first postwar manifestation of the strategic essence of modern militant anti-fascism emerged in Britain where fascists took advantage of lax speech laws to attempt a revival of their movement. Despite ebbs and flows, the basic strategic repertoire laid out by the 43 Group carried forward into British anti-fascism over the following decades. By the 1970s, it had become far more ideological and increasingly embedded in punk subculture. Similar developments percolated across the continent and beyond as demographic, economic, and political transformations created openings for the Far Right. Thus, we can say that modern militant anti-fascism, or what historian Gilles Vergnon refers to as "*néo-antifascisme*," grew out of the confrontational protest strategies of the first postwar decades, the autonomous politics and subcultural shifts of the seventies and eighties, and a broad antiracism (informed by anti-imperialism) distinct from the prewar tendency of European anti-fascists to limit their antiracist analysis to anti-Semitism.[231] By the turn of the twenty-first century, antifa had become a potent and portable formula for confronting fascism. Moving into the new millennium, however, anti-fascists in a number of countries would have to recalibrate their strategies as new far-right parties rose to prominence by distancing themselves from overtly fascist politics, and explicitly bonehead supporters.

THREE

THE RISE OF

“PINSTRIPE NAZIS”

AND ANTI-FASCISM TODAY

“Scared as fuck” and unsure of what awaited him, Dominic boarded a late-night train bound for Heidenau, Germany, where neo-Nazis were attacking newly arrived Syrian refugees. Xenophobia had been mounting in Germany since the start of anti-refugee demonstrations in 2013. In October of the following year, racists attempted to burn down a refugee camp near Rostock, triggering memories of the city’s infamous anti-immigrant pogrom twenty-two years earlier. By July 2015, matters escalated even further as anti-fascists mobilized to defend a refugee tent city from neo-Nazi and hooligan attacks in Dresden.

A month later, the conflict had reached a breaking point in the country’s conservative east. On the evening of August 20, 2015, an attempt had been made to burn down the refugee center. The next day, buses carrying 250 refugees into Heidenau (outside of Dresden) were blocked by a thousand members of the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) and anti-immigrant locals who rioted throughout the night. Dominic was one of several hundred who had responded to an anti-fascist call to defend the refugees in what had quickly become a matter of life and death.[232]

Upon arrival, Dominic and his comrades headed to the refugee shelter. He could “see how relieved they were that me and my two hundred middle-

class white friends with our black jackets were waiting in front of their home to defend them." And when the neo-Nazis attacked with fireworks, stones, and bottles, the refugees fought back alongside the German antifa, preventing the attackers from reaching the shelter. "The refugees told me," Dominic remembered, "that we came from a war zone where we were threatened with death every day, and now we are threatened again." Dominic "felt ashamed" of his country, but defending the mainly Syrian refugees "made me feel like this is the right thing to do and I want to do it until the end."[233]

The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 catalyzed the largest influx of refugees Europe has experienced since the massive levels of displacement following World War II. Although most of the 4.9 million Syrian refugees that the war produced fled to neighboring countries—with 2.5 million displaced to Turkey and a million to Lebanon, for example—1.3 million refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere fled to Europe in 2015, and another 350,000 arrived in 2016. However, not all migrants were so fortunate—at least 4,812 people died attempting to cross the Mediterranean in 2016 alone.[234]

Nationalist hysteria about the refugees was exacerbated by the economic turmoil wrought by the financial crisis of 2008 and the widespread fear generated over recent years by a series of bloody attacks carried out by so-called "radical Islamists" including the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting and the Bataclan nightclub attack in Paris in 2015, the Brussels airport and metro bombings in March 2016, and the truck attack in Nice, France, in July 2016. More recently, an explosion outside of a concert in Manchester, England, killed twenty-two people in May 2017.

Far-right parties wielded an ethnic and linguistic interpretation of citizenship to marginalize immigrants and even second- or third-generation minorities. They warned of heightened crime (especially sexual assault), strains on social services, competition for jobs, and fundamentally a loss of national, racial, cultural, and religious identity. According to the 1970s *Front National* slogan, "one million unemployed is one million immigrants too many."[235] Although statistics show that refugees have not caused a notable increase in poverty or crime, "perception is reality," Georg

Pazderski of the far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) argued, “and at the moment, our citizens feel unwell, insecure.”[236]

In this tense context, a significant number of far-right parties have emerged from relative obscurity to challenge the European order by jettisoning their explicitly fascist origins or associations, in order to cultivate a mainstream appeal. By pivoting from biological racism toward cultural difference, security, and scarcity, they have harnessed and fomented popular fears about immigration. They have also capitalized on outrage over widespread austerity measures that socialist and Left parties often grudgingly accepted or even orchestrated. Their “euroskeptic” solutions entail a turn away from the “globalism” of the European Union toward a return to the traditional sovereignty and chauvinism of the nation-state.

These politics were on full display across Europe. In the United Kingdom, the 2016 “Brexit” vote for the U.K. to leave the EU was largely fueled by the far-right United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Similarly, in France, the fiercely anti-immigrant *Front National* won 27 percent of the national vote in December 2016, and Marine Le Pen, who took over the party leadership from her father, Jean-Marie, in 2011, won 33.9 percent of the vote in her unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 2017. In Austria, Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), whose slogan was “Austria first,” won 49.7 percent of the vote in the 2016 presidential election, but fell just short of the victorious Green Party candidate. Likewise, in the Netherlands, the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), personified by the intensely anti-Muslim Geert Wilders, seemed poised to win the 2017 general elections after a decade of growing momentum, but the PVV won only twenty seats, falling short of the center-right incumbent prime minister’s tally of thirty-three seats. In 2014, the far-right Jobbik won 20 percent of the vote to become the third-largest party in Hungary. Two years earlier, Jobbik had proposed legislation targeting “sexual deviancy” with sentences of up to eight years. In Greece, Golden Dawn, which the Council of Europe’s human rights commissioner called “neo-Nazi and violent,” has become the third-ranking political force since winning eighteen parliamentary seats in 2012. In Finland, a far-right party called the Finns became the second-largest party in the current governing coalition. Similarly right-wing parties have also ascended in Scandinavia:

the Danish People's Party became the second political force in Denmark by winning 21 percent of the vote in 2015. And the Sweden Democrats became the third-largest party in their country as well.[237]

In Germany, anti-immigrant euroskepticism has been championed by the new Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). Although it was founded in 2013 by neoliberal journalists and economists in opposition to Chancellor Merkel's Greek bailout, it drifted further to the right as Merkel opened the country's doors to more than a million refugees in 2015. That year, Germany experienced more than a thousand attacks on refugee shelters, reflecting widespread outrage at the government's immigration policy. Anti-immigrant sentiment only escalated when eighty women reported being sexually assaulted by a thousand men "of Arab or North African appearance" according to police on New Year's Eve moving into 2016.

The AfD eagerly capitalized on the growing anti-immigrant frenzy by arguing that "Islam does not belong in Germany," a position that, according to polls, 60 percent of Germans agreed with. While the party peaked at 16 percent nationally in late 2016, its influence extended beyond its electorate. The AfD played an important role in pressuring Merkel to apologize for her open stance on refugees, and to strike a deal with Turkey to reduce the number of Syrians that would be allowed into Europe. As well, Merkel's party aggressively pursued the swelling AfD electorate by proposing a ban on burkas in public and a new Integration Law that would control where refugees can live and force them to learn German language, culture, and history.[238]

Of course, German history was at the heart of the immigration conflict. For generations, German nationalism had been tainted by its association with the Nazi regime. This legacy informed Merkel's universalist argument that the country's destructive past gave it a duty to embrace refugees. According to the AfD leader Björn Höcke, however, years of national "shame" left the country with "the mentality of a totally vanquished people." Instead, he argued Germans should emphasize that "there is no people that has given more to humanity than Germany."[239] The project of reclaiming German national "grandeur" began its twisting upward ascent in the 1990s after reunification. Perhaps its most public manifestation was the annual commemoration of the Allied bombing of Dresden that killed

twenty-five thousand people in 1945. Starting in 1999 and gaining momentum in the new millennium, neo-Nazis from across Europe flocked to Dresden every February to mourn what the NPD called a "Holocaust of bombs."

But as the number of Nazis grew into the thousands, so too did their anti-fascist counterparts, who, in 2004, marched against them in Dresden with a banner reading "Tears of Nazis galore—against all forms of historical revisionism."[240]

This was the time when Dominic formed an antifa group of seven to ten young punks in his small town of fifteen thousand in western Germany. Like "many young people" in Germany, anti-fascism was his "first stop in the process of political radicalization." Dominic's small crew focused on investigating local skinheads and passing out leaflets with their information "to try to make life hard for the Nazis." Every second weekend about a hundred Nazis would organize demonstrations in his region where they would be confronted not only by thousands of *Autonomen* but also calls for counterdemonstrations from local mayors and major political parties. Dominic remembers how it was "easy to discredit the hard-core Nazis" since anti-fascists could rest assured that "mainstream society was always with you on a discursive and sometimes even a physical level." They were "easy times compared to now," he wistfully told me.[241]

The apogee of this "classical period" of anti-fascism, as Dominic called it, came when anti-fascists finally managed to block the annual Dresden Nazi march (the largest of its kind in Europe) in 2010. That year, the *No pasarán* antifa alliance and the *Dresden-Nazifrei* coalition mobilized twelve thousand people into massive blockades—including a human chain in the Dresden city center—and flaming barricades that thoroughly disrupted Nazi transportation and forced the police to cancel the event. Conservative commentators had argued that confrontation was counterproductive because "the louder the indignation against the neo-Nazis, the more they are incited to continue their provocations. It creates for them a perfect stage." Yet, once the anti-fascists finally managed to stop the march after a decade of trying, Nazi attendance at the Dresden commemoration plummeted from about six thousand to five hundred in 2011.[242] It was not a "perfect stage" after all.

While German anti-fascists were “celebrating the success of stopping them,”[243] as Dominic put it, the landscape of far-right politics shifted under their feet in 2013 with the development of the AfD and the founding of Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West, known by its German acronym as PEGIDA, in Dresden in October 2014. Every Monday, PEGIDA organized “evening strolls” chanting “Ali Go Home!” with banners decrying “Fatima Merkel.” Before long, these “strolls” grew to include fifteen thousand people.[244]

In many ways, PEGIDA represented a far more serious challenge for the anti-fascist movement than the routine annual Nazi marches of the previous decade. The first challenge was logistical: It is much easier to mobilize against annual demonstrations than it is to oppose weekly demonstrations. Moreover, given the more right-wing nature of the east, much of the opposition to the annual Nazi marches was not local but rather “exported to Dresden,” as Dominic explained.

But in a region where “the Nazi movement was much more accepted by normal people” than in the west, PEGIDA managed to cultivate a respectable, mainstream platform for Islamophobia that tapped into the democratic protest spirit of 1989 by using its slogan “We are the people.”[245] There were other slogans, too: In a reference to the Cologne sexual assaults, one PEGIDA leader regularly wore a T-shirt that read “Rapefugees not welcome.”[246] In fact, by focusing exclusively on the most authoritarian strains of Islam that oppose political democracy, homosexuality, or feminism, for example, without acknowledging that most religions have equivalent tendencies, many leftist and centrist Europeans have been pulled into far-right formations like the AfD and PEGIDA.

Critics called PEGIDA “pinstripe Nazis,” to emphasize the underlying fascism beneath their veneer of respectability. This mainstream image often provided cover for the activities of neo-Nazis such as the violent members of Hooligans Against Salafists (HoGeSa), the German Defense League (an homage to the English Defense League), and right-wing biker gangs.[247] In fact, after its formation in Dresden, many other “GIDAs” emerged across the country such as KAGIDA in Kassel and BAGIDA in Bavaria. The most successful of the “GIDA” spinoffs was Leipzig’s LEGIDA, which mobilized several thousand demonstrators, but similar efforts in the west

fared poorly. PEGIDA's mobilizing capacity seems to have peaked in January 2015, though it has expanded into a number of European countries including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the U.K.[248]

According to Dominic, the rise of the AfD and PEGIDA "brought traditional anti-fascism into a crisis of not being confronted anymore by a small radical minority but by a huge proportion of society that articulates itself in a racist way…[antifa] 'military' tactics do not work if you face fifteen thousand people in Dresden or a party that can win 20 percent of the vote."

The challenges of adapting anti-fascist strategy to face a more popular, mainstream foe have apparently brought the anti-fascist and antiracist movements—previously fairly separate—closer together for joint action in support of refugees. For example, although most attempts to squat homes for refugees have been quashed by the police, in the face of a xenophobic backlash German radicals and newly arrived migrants and refugees have started to work together in pursuit of housing and decent living conditions.

But meanwhile, the growth of popular far-right politics has thrived on a rejection of the "gender regime" that has infringed upon traditional patriarchy. This aspect of the far-right resurgence has furthered the development of fantifa (feminist antifa) groups, such as the *queerfeministische* Fantifa Frankfurt, in the tradition of the 1990s. In May 2016, there was a Fantifa Kongress in Hamburg "open to all genders." Its mission statement read "Since Antifa is currently excluding and unattractive for women* a rethinking of the vigorous antifascist movement must occur."[249]

Yet, despite a number of attempts to adapt anti-fascism to the threat of popular far-right politics, Dominic laments that the movement has "no answer to it yet." Ultimately, he argues for a dual strategy entailing "a political movement that is open to a lot of issues along with a military wing fighting the concrete problems on the ground…you have to separate them in the structure but they are not necessarily exclusive to each other."[250]

A similar dynamic has unfolded in Denmark over the past two decades. While the German antifa mobilized every year against the Dresden Nazi marches, the Danish antifa organized against the annual demonstration

commemorating the 1987 suicide of the former Nazi leader Rudolf Hess. In 1992, two thousand Nazis marched in his honor in Germany, but after state repression started to make this more difficult, the march was moved to Roskilde, Denmark for the first time in 1995. There, they confronted an anti-fascist movement that had been originally created in response to the 1992 neo-Nazi mail-bombing of the office of the International Socialists, which had killed a young antiracist named Henrik Christensen. The murder had outraged the Danish Left, and several groups had created the Anti-Racist-Network, while Anti-Fascist Action had developed out of Copenhagen's autonomous squatting movement, led by the BZ (Occupation Brigade), which had been quite formidable in the 1980s.[251]

In the late nineties, massive coalitions of unions, Left parties, and militant anti-fascists united to block the intended route of the Rudolf Hess march as it left from the Nazi headquarters in a small town outside of Roskilde. Although there weren't many Danish Nazis at the time, Swedes and Germans linked to the English Combat 18 and Blood and Honour often operated out of Denmark. A Danish antifa named Ole explained how organizers developed a two-pronged strategy to thwart the commemoration. First, the parties and unions would mobilize a thousand people to arrive early in the morning and set up a large encampment in the middle of the road with stages for speakers and music. Second, small groups of anti-fascists would block the train stations so that the Nazis could not leave town to hold their commemoration elsewhere—one year the Nazis simply walked around the corner of their headquarters to take a photo with their banners to post online before going back inside.

To prevent even that superficial marker of success, the next year Danish antifa militants arrived outside the Nazi headquarters early in the morning to prevent them from taking any photos. They worked in coordination with German antifa, who would position scouts by the ferry station to alert the Danes of German Nazis crossing the Baltic Sea. Ole chuckled remembering how the frustration of being trapped in their headquarters caused the Nazis to bicker and fight among themselves, leading to a split.[252] The successful blockade of the Hess march fractured Danish Nazism and pushed most boneheads off the streets and onto the Internet over the coming years.[253] Yet, the coalition between the mainstream Left and militant anti-fascism

also suffered as the Social Democrats disavowed antifa in an effort to court moderates.[254]

When fascist groups have attempted to form a public political presence in Denmark over the last decade, perhaps the most successful method of combating them has been exposing their actions and identities. In English this is called “doxxing” (or “doxing”): making someone’s private information public in order to intimidate them or leverage public opinion to embarrass them, get them fired, or cause some other negative outcome. While researching and exposing fascists has long been a staple of postwar anti-fascism, its scope has expanded with the growth of the Internet and social media. Today it plays a central role in both fascist and anti-fascist playbooks.

Rasmus Preston is a Danish anti-fascist and filmmaker with quite a bit of personal experience on both sides of the doxxing war. In 2012, he went against antifa orthodoxy by going public with his membership in Copenhagen’s Projekt Antifa. In retrospect, he acknowledges that the “decision was more serious than I realized at the time,” since it resulted in the kind of harassment that forces most anti-fascists to conceal their identities. Over the following months, Nazis doxxed him, assaulted him several times, and regularly sent him death threats. Nevertheless, “I haven’t regretted it,” he explained, because “it’s important not to be afraid and to show that the face of anti-fascism is not a black-hooded masked person, but the politics of real human beings who have feelings and are humans in every way.” On the other side, Preston is one of the main figures of the anti-fascist research group Redox, which got its start in 2006 when it torpedoed the Danish Front by publishing photos of its leaders’ swastika tattoos and getting its members fired from their jobs. Preston explained how “doxxing is a very important tool to create conflict within far-right movements” because it establishes a constant “mental burden.”[255]

However, doxxing and traditional anti-fascist strategies have not been sufficient to defeat Denmark’s new far-right populist wave, according to Preston. At times, anti-fascist street mobilizations against the small Danish PEGIDA, renamed For Freedom, have disrupted the plans of anti-immigrant organizers. In December 2016, anti-fascists in Copenhagen erected flaming barricades in front of an English-language banner reading

“Make Racists Afraid Again” (a clear homage to the anti-Trump movement) in an effort to stop the For Freedom procession.[256]

However, it is the growth of another group, the Danish People’s Party (DPP), that represents a more serious threat for anti-fascists. Founded in 1995, the DPP grew steadily in the 2000s before winning the European parliamentary election in 2014, and then gaining 21 percent of the vote in 2015 to become Denmark’s second-biggest party. Much of the party’s success is owed to its strategic incorporation of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-EU perspectives into a more traditional Danish embrace of the welfare state. This allowed it to “push the boundaries of what you can say and what kind of politics you can advocate,” Preston argued.

More recently, though, the DPP has “watered down” its opposition to the EU and immigration in order to support the minority government of Lars Løkke Rasmussen—thereby opening up political space to the party’s right for the emergence of the New Right (Nye Borgerlige) in 2015. This emergent party paired its populist xenophobia with a neoliberal economic platform, and attacked the DPP for complacency on immigration after the country received more than twenty thousand asylum applications in 2015. Although the New Right is only polling between 2.6 and 4.5 percent, the fact that most of those voters are coming from the DPP has now pulled the DPP all the way back to the right: In February 2017, the DPP argued that Muslim immigrants should celebrate Christmas and attend church “if they want to be Danish,” and its statement that “immigrants and their descendants” could not be Danes even if they were born in the country or were citizens was narrowly approved by parliament.

In short, the xenophobic tide has now grown so strong in Denmark that even the Social Democrats have moved to the right by saying that the government should pay immigrants to “go home.”[257]

Preston, the longtime anti-fascist, explained the challenge and his take on the way forward:

> In the past, with militant violent Nazi groups, the antifascist strategy was obvious. Make sure they don’t march, block them, be ready to fight them physically if necessary, stop them from organizing. Now it is more difficult. With populist movements,

> it is hard to always justify militant strategies against them as public opinion is shifting, as the violence the far-right advocates is not clear and apparent (but hidden in their policies, influencing mostly nonwhites, people outside the "national community/tribe" which are hidden from us). Here the classic anti-fascist strategy meets its limits. We must build popular libertarian socialist movements that can formulate answers to the same questions that the Far Right is asking.[258]

Meanwhile, in Sweden, the equivalent of the Dresden and Roskilde marches was the annual Salem march commemorating the Swedish neo-Nazi Daniel Wretström who was allegedly killed in a fight with immigrant youth in 2000. Starting the next year, neo-Nazis from across Sweden and across Europe (even including some Americans) converged on the small town of Salem outside of Stockholm to march silently with fascistic torches raised to remember Wretström and promote white supremacy.

Over the previous decade, Sweden had established a reputation as the home of one of the most violent neo-Nazi movements on the continent (despite its small size), revolving primarily around the white-power rock scene. From 1989 to 1991, neo-Nazis carried out more than a hundred attacks against refugee camps. Over the next two years, John Ausonius, known as the "laser man," started a shooting spree targeting random people of color that injured ten and killed one person before he was caught. In 1995, neo-Nazis murdered two young boys and a homosexual ice hockey player. In 1999, after a series of bank robberies and the bombings of a union office and the car of a journalist, the violence climaxed with the murders of the trade unionist Björn Söderberg and two police officers.[259]

But all the neo-Nazi violence provoked a harsh societal backlash. Demonstrations against racist terror drew thousands, while major newspapers published the names and photos of the country's leading Nazis, effectively squashing the movement. It was after this that Wretström's death in 2000 became an opportunity for the neo-Nazis of the National Socialist Front, the Swedish Resistance Movement (SMR), and others to re-create themselves as victims rather than aggressors. By 2003, the Salem march

drew two thousand neo-Nazis and supporters, making it the largest Nazi march in Scandinavian history.

They were not unopposed, however. In Salem, the neo-Nazis were confronted by the Swedish anti-fascist movement and their domestic and international allies. The Swedish Antifascistisk Aktion (AFA) was officially formed in 1993 after several years of organizing and networking among mainly anarchist and autonomous anti-fascists who were in touch with German, British, and Danish comrades. According to Dolores C., a longtime anti-fascist militant and organizer with the anarcho-syndicalist union SAC (Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation), by the late 1990s the Swedish AFA had many prominent women organizers and the network as a whole placed a great emphasis on feminism.[260]

Over the next decade, Dolores and her comrades put an "unimaginable" amount of time and effort into organizing against the Salem march. In 2002 and 2003, anti-fascists attempted to shut down the march by physically blocking the train station so the Nazis could not exit. They were violently beaten back by the police, although they managed to delay the march. Still, the police response forced organizers to "experiment" with new strategies. In 2004, groups of anti-fascists dressed "normally" to blend in with the commuter crowd at the Stockholm train station, then blocked the entrances to the trains bound for Salem so the train could not stop safely in the station, while another group wearing bandannas and hoods stood behind a large banner blocking the entrances to the platform. The action succeeded in forcing the Nazis to change train stations. The next year, anti-fascists carried out the same strategy at multiple train stations as the number of Nazis at the Salem march declined. Anti-fascist unionists working as train drivers and ticket checkers put in a "safety notice" to their bosses arguing that they could not work that day because it was unsafe to drive neo-Nazis. Other tactics included boarding the Nazi train and pulling the security break, and sneaking up to a neo-Nazi woman scheduled to give the main speech the next day and cutting off her long blond hair.

According to Dolores, Swedish antifa organizers "learned that the best thing is to have a diversity of tactics." After a large anti-fascist bloc was charged by police horses in 2006, organizers decided that forming a large mass only made them easier to contain. In 2007, antifa demonstrators tried

dispersing into smaller groups to spread out the police and give themselves the time to wreak enough havoc to shut down the march. Some groups started fires, others set off fireworks, while others formed anti-fascist choirs. The chaos and conflict that the anti-fascists produced diminished the turnout at the Nazi march every year until it ended after 2011. Organizers took credit for blocking attempts to develop a wider base of support by scaring away all but the most committed neo-Nazis.[261]

Anti-fascists had managed to shut down the Salem march, but neo-Nazis still posed a grave threat. On December 15, 2013, about thirty members of the Swedish Resistance Movement (SMR) attacked an antiracist demonstration in a Stockholm suburb. Although the police would later admit to having been tipped off about the attack in advance, they only stationed six officers at the demonstration, and as the black-clad neo-Nazis advanced, those six officers fled to get their helmets—leaving the antiracist crowd of seniors and families exposed. The few anti-fascist militants who were there stepped forward to defend the crowd. One, Joel Bjurströmer Almgren, noticed that several of the SMR attackers were carrying knives. Recalling that SMR Nazis had been responsible for several knife attacks, one of them fatal, over the previous year, he decided that he would not let the same fate befall any of his comrades or the "unprotected demonstration." Joel "pulled [his] knife and went into the chaos." Feeling that he "had no choice" in order to defend the crowd, he stabbed one of the Nazis. He is currently serving five and a half years for "attempted murder, violent disorder, and carrying an illegal weapon."[262]

Months later, members of the neo-Nazi Party of the Swedes attacked four feminists on their way home from an International Women's Day demonstration in Malmö, leading to injuries so severe they all had to be hospitalized. Showan, a twenty-five-year-old Iranian-Swede and founder of the Swedish chapter of "Football Fans Against Homophobia," was put in a coma from which he has fortunately recovered.[263]

Around this time, the semi-clandestine anti-fascist group Revolutionary Front (Revolutionära Fronten) gained notoriety by breaking through the front doors of the homes of known neo-Nazis with axes, trashing them, and putting the videos online. As opposed to Denmark, where fascists and anti-fascists apparently have an unwritten rule against going to each other's

homes, no such limits exist in the Swedish struggle. According to Dolores C., some in the antifa milieu had concerns about their decision to put the videos online and do an interview with *Vice News*. Others, she explained, had issues with the fact that many of their members came from the football hooligan culture, which they felt cultivated a "scene that was not that interested in anything but [physical confrontation]." But as Dolores analyzed it, "You have to act against Nazis but it cannot be your only practice…to be antifa is a necessity but it's not our identity."

Nevertheless, over the last few years the Swedish anti-fascist movement has suffered from intense government repression, such that the Revolutionary Front is no more, and the Swedish AFA is apparently relatively inactive.[264]

While these dynamics were unfolding, Sweden experienced its own surge of "respectable" populist far-right politics in the form of the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD). Founded in 1988, the SD were an explicitly neo-Nazi party until they decided to tear a page out of the French *Front National* playbook in 1996 and downplay their vicious racism. They even changed their symbol from a fascistic arm holding a torch to a "fragile white flower" as some historians have described it. Riding a mounting wave of European xenophobia, in 2010 the SD entered parliament with 5.7 percent of the vote. By 2014 their euroskeptical and anti-immigrant platform garnered them 13 percent of the vote, making them the third-largest party in the Riksdag. One poll taken in early 2017 showed them to be the most popular party in Sweden, based in part on outrage over admitting a record 150,000 immigrants the previous year.[265]

Although he did not refer to the Sweden Democrats specifically, remarks made by the imprisoned anti-fascist Joel Bjurströmer Almgren point toward the need to renew the anti-fascist movement in Sweden. Although he stands firmly behind his actions and declares that he would act the same way again if the need arose, Joel declared:

> I think anti-fascism in Sweden is a bit stuck. I think we should find new ways. Somewhere between 2005 and 2010 we got stuck. We saw that violence was effective and we got stuck in that pattern…[fascists] moved to other arenas and we were still

> stuck in our ways. Violent tactics do not work on everything. Violence is still a tool but should only be used when needed. We needed to restructure and think of new ways to confront them. But we didn't do that, so now it feels like we are falling behind. They are leading the way and we are chasing after them.[266]

Similar challenges have developed in the Netherlands with the meteoric rise of the anti-Islamic populist leader Geert Wilders. Wilders's popularity grew out of his uncompromising opposition to Islam, shrouded in feminist and pro-LGBT rhetoric, but evident in his desire to eliminate all Dutch mosques and ban the Koran. By 2010 he had moved away from his earlier neoliberalism to develop a "welfare-chauvinism" that would base benefits on language skills and refuse them to women who wore a burka.

What really set Wilders apart though, from the perspective of anti-fascist strategy, was his initial refusal to associate with the pseudo-fascist right of Europe, and the wholly unorthodox fact that Wilders is the only official member of his own political party, the Party for Freedom (PVV). This strategy has enabled Wilders to avoid scandals that could arise from his membership. Moreover, for many years the PVV shunned the kinds of demonstrations and popular street presence that are typically a hallmark of the far right. The Dutch antifa Job Polak explained that "We, as an anti-fascist movement, still haven't got a handle on" how best to mobilize against this form of politics, since its lack of a street presence "makes it way harder" to confront.

Over the past several years, however, the PVV has gradually moved out into a more public form of popular politics by holding anti-austerity demonstrations and Wilders, who told *The Guardian* in 2008 that "my allies are not Le Pen or Haider," has nonetheless cozied up to Le Pen's increasingly popular French *Front National*, as well as the Austrian FPÖ.[267] Although Wilders lost the 2017 General Elections, the PVV is still poised to capitalize on any crisis that may cause Dutch xenophobia and Islamophobia to flare up.

Of them all, however, the most important far-right party in Western Europe, and the one that—along with the Austrian FPÖ—arguably set the

tone for the current rise of the Right, is Wilders's new ally, the *Front National*. After she took over party leadership from her father, Jean-Marie, in 2011, Marine Le Pen immediately sought to further the party's ongoing process of *dédiabolisation* (decontamination) by shifting away from the FN's early associations with fascism and anti-Semitism and focusing instead on Islam. And despite a public feud with her father in 2015, when he praised the collaborationist Vichy Regime of the Second World War and referred to Nazi concentration camps as a mere "detail of history," Marine Le Pen has largely succeeded in normalizing the FN to the point where, just five years after she took it over, the party boasted 11 mayors and more than 1,500 municipal councilors, and in 2016 it won 27 percent of the national vote.

Meanwhile, the party's nationalist Islamophobia and euroskeptical opposition to the "undemocratic" EU have shifted the center of gravity of French politics, as public fear of "terrorism" has soared. In order to compete with the FN, the former president Nicolas Sarkozy, who attempted to run again in 2017, in some ways surpassed Le Pen's anti-immigrant stance.[268]

According to Camille of SCALP Besançon (who only agreed to communicate through an encrypted chat), the rise of the FN, fueled in part by a series of deadly attacks, and other dynamics led to a "big turn" in French anti-fascism from roughly 2010 to 2014. Culturally, the development of a hip-hop antifa culture, driven by groups like Sang Mêlé and Première Ligne, diversified the movement's ranks and expanded its cultural horizons beyond its punk origins. Older groups faded, such as SCALP groups in Toulouse, Dijon, and Besançon and the *No Pasarán* network, while newer ones formed, such as Action Antifasciste Paris Banlieue in 2010.[269]

One of the new antifa groups is Pavé Brûlant (Burning Pavement), which formed in 2015 in Bordeaux. Since its formation, Pavé Brûlant has successfully shut down several attempts by the nationalist Bloc Identitaire to organize anti-halal events meant to cloak Islamophobia in a concern for animal rights. In interviews, these anti-fascists recounted how the rise of the *Front National* legitimized casual racism and marginalized the antiracist position. This dynamic, which many commentators have come to call the

"*lepénisation des esprits*" (Le Pen-ization of the minds), has become a hallmark of the banal new far right.

This political shift factored into the decision of the Parisian SCALP-Reflex to disband in January 2014 after twenty-five years of anti-fascist militancy. The anti-fascists of SCALP-Reflex explained the "great strategic turn of the FN—and one of the great difficulties of radical anti-fascism today: the strategy is no longer for [party] militants to occupy the streets, but for spokespeople to occupy television screens."[270] In light of these challenges, SCALP-Reflex made the following assessment:

> Street anti-fascism (demonstrations, marches, etc.) today is at an impasse: either it confronts extreme right groups that are politically insignificant, but physically dangerous; or it tries to confront organizations that are politically significant and finds itself faced with parties that are not only absent from the street, but are by this point well integrated into the political game, sustained by law enforcement, and perceived as legitimate by the population…one of the effects of the *lepénisation des esprits* is to render anti-fascist action illegitimate in the eyes of power and of the population…[271]

For Camille, the only way to respond to the rise of mainstream far-right parties is "to transform anti-fascism into a concrete and large solidarity movement that can develop the concept and practice of self-defense against the police, state, and racist activism…The *Front National*'s fuel is fear. Our fuel is solidarity."[272]

★ ★ ★

September 30, 2012. Another tense evening of uncertainty for immigrants in Athens. In recent weeks, groups of thugs from the rising fascist political party Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) had made a sport of demolishing the market stalls of migrant vendors, brutalizing them in the process. Days earlier, eighty to one hundred Golden Dawn members wearing their standard black T-shirt and combat pants attacked a Tanzanian community center and smashed nearby shops while the police stood idly by. Around the

same time, a Ghanaian vendor named Issa Ahmed Agboluaje was stabbed and his friend beaten. Golden Dawn members beat an Egyptian migrant named Abu Zeid Mubarak Abu Zeid with clubs and iron bars, fracturing his jaw and breaking his nose. With the police looking the other way, or even participating in the anti-immigrant violence at times, local migrants had few allies.[273]

Among them, however, was an assembly of Athenian anarchist groups that had recently organized a series of antifa motorcycle patrols through immigrant neighborhoods. They were greeted by enthusiastic applause from migrants as they passed. Yiorgos, a young filmmaker and one of the patrol organizers, explained that "we tried to use these patrols in some military way to attack the fascists and as demonstrations—to mix these two things." From his perspective, these highly visible patrols were "psychologically important" for the anti-fascist movement.

And on that tense evening in late September 2012, an antifa patrol composed of eighty motorcycles carrying about 150 antifascists sped through an immigrant neighborhood holding sturdy flagpoles adorned with red and black anarchist flags and chanting "Smash the Fascists!"—and came upon a group of Golden Dawn members. A battle ensued that left several of the fascists hospitalized. Just after the fight, however, squads of the elite Delta force of the Athens police attacked the anti-fascists in a narrow sidestreet. While many of the anti-fascists evaded capture, fifteen were arrested. Neighborhood immigrants and anarchists chanted anti-fascist chants as they were being taken away. "It was an emotional moment," Yiorgos recounted.[274]

None of the fascists were arrested.

The fifteen anti-fascist prisoners were tortured for five days in the Attica General Police Directorate, as were another twenty-five anti-fascists, arrested the next day at a solidarity demonstration. Variously, the antifa were severely beaten, stripped naked, spat on, deprived of sleep by having lasers pointed in their eyes, "used as ashtrays," and denied water to the point where some "were so thirsty [they] drank water from the toilets."

Soon uncovered and reported on by *The Guardian*, the torture of the anti-fascists became a mini-scandal for the Greek government.[275] Still, even

though a motorcycle procession of two thousand antifa protested in front of parliament, and other demonstrations took place in Kavala, Crete, and elsewhere in Greece, Yiorgos lamented that the government had effectively ended the anti-fascist patrols in Athens…and the assembly that organized them. Motorcycle demonstrations continued to take place, but they were no longer part of a sustained strategy of resistance to Golden Dawn.[276]

The nature of Golden Dawn makes this all the more significant: Unlike the Dutch PVV or the French FN of recent years, Golden Dawn is very much a traditional fascist party in its desire to control the streets and generate violent populist fury against "illegal immigrants, anarchists and all those who have destroyed Athens several times," as Golden Dawn MP Ilias Panagiotaros phrased it. (A month after the arrest of the fifteen anti-fascists, Panagiotaros led an attack on theatergoers attending a performance depicting a gay Jesus.)

The origins of Golden Dawn can be traced to the creation of the *Chrysi Avgi* newspaper in 1983 by Nikos Michaloliakos, who became party leader when Golden Dawn was officially formed in 1985. Although Golden Dawn prefers the label "nationalist," its fascist roots are evident in Michaloliakos's early flirtation with national socialism, and his associations with the imprisoned former leaders of the military junta. Then there's the fact that the party's logo is the swastika-esque meander, and that its members often raise the fascist salute and organize solemn marches holding torches aloft at rallies in the Nazi tradition.

For decades, Golden Dawn was little more than a fringe party. As recently as 2009 it received only 0.29 percent of the vote.[277] Then the Greek debt crisis hit in 2010. To stave off bankruptcy, the government accepted massive bailout packages that required the implementation of harsh austerity measures and drastic tax increases. While a series of bailouts and austerity measures prevented the complete collapse of the Greek economy, they did not prevent the complete collapse of everyday life for many Greeks. The country's economy shrank by 25 percent over five years, a rate similar to that of the Great Depression in the United States. Unemployment figures were staggering: 25 percent overall in 2015, and, for young workers, more than 50 percent in 2016. Funding for mental health

was slashed by 20 percent from 2010 to 2011 and by 55 percent the next year.

Unsurprisingly over that period, the suicide rate increased by 35 percent. (As the Spanish 15M movement says: "*No son suicidios, son asesinatos*"—"They are not suicides, they are murders.")[278]

Golden Dawn's upward ascent began as the crisis spread, winning its first seat on the Athens city council in 2010, before entering parliament for the first time in 2012 with eighteen seats and about 7 percent of the vote. On the street level, it organized "citizens' groups" to harass migrants, whether they were part of the supposedly 350,000 without papers or not. These vigilante patrols felt so emboldened that they started to attack random people thought to be "foreign" in broad daylight, "chasing them through the streets, dragging them off buses, beating and stabbing them." A week after entering parliament, a group of fifty Golden Dawn members armed with clubs and shields drove their motorbikes into the main square of the Athenian suburb of Nikaia. A Pakistani owner of a hair salon said Golden Dawn members told him "you're the cause of Greece's problems. You have seven days to close or we'll burn your shop—and we'll burn you."

Immigrant insecurity was amplified by the fact that a very high percentage of the police voted for Golden Dawn, and video evidence suggested fairly regular cooperation between the two. As government after government (even the socialist Syriza) accepted austerity measures dictated by the European financial "troika," thereby seemingly ceding Greek sovereignty to the EU and IMF, Golden Dawn's hypernationalist, anti-immigrant platform started to gain traction, and by 2015 it was the most popular party among eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds.[279]

Yet as the fascist party with the most intimidating street presence in Europe started to grow, it encountered arguably the continent's most formidable anarchist/autonomous movement. As opposed to most other European countries, Greek militant anti-fascism, which dates back to the resistance to Italian Fascist and Nazi occupation during the war and continued through the military Junta of 1967–1974, did not for the most part adopt the pan-radical left antifa model. Instead, militant anti-fascism has become one facet of a broader anarchist movement engaged in a wide variety of social struggles. Influenced by the Italian and German

autonomous movements, French Situationist thought, punk rock, and the legacy of resistance to the junta, the modern Greek anarchist movement emerged in the 1980s.

Yet, it was the uprising of 2008 that put the movement on the international map for most people. That December, the police murder of the fifteen-year-old anarchist Alexis Grigoropoulos triggered a month of unparalleled insurrection across Greece. Anarchists, students, football hooligans, Roma migrants, and other frustrated segments of society took to the streets to attack luxury shops, besiege police stations and government ministries, smash and torch banks, expropriate food from supermarkets, and occupy schools, universities, and radio and television stations. Even the giant Christmas tree in Athens' central Syntagma Square could not escape the flames. Workers walked off the job and student, worker, and neighborhood assemblies sprung up across the country. The struggling police informally enlisted the support of fascist thugs—a vision of things to come. When the smoke cleared, approximately €200 million of property destruction had been committed—and an entire generation of Greek youth had been radicalized.[280]

Despite Greece's active and vibrant radical politics, the ascent of Golden Dawn took many off-guard. When I spent time in Greece in 2012, months after fascists entered parliament, nearly every conversation I had with local anarchists included comments along the lines of, "We had no idea this would happen. They were a complete joke before."[281]

Mural for slain antifa rapper Pavlos Fyssas (Killah P) in Athens. [PHOTO BY AUTHOR]

Matters grew more serious on September 18, 2013, when the anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas (Killah P) was stabbed to death by Golden Dawn members after he watched a football game at an Athens café. The murder sparked outrage across the country as anti-fascists shouting "Kill fascists in every neighborhood" clashed with police, while in the public sector a general strike was called. Anti-fascists targeted cash-for-gold shops particularly, because many of them were allegedly owned by Golden Dawn members with links to organized crime.[282]

But while the majority of anarchists and other autonomous anti-fascists avenged Fyssas's murder with targeted property destruction and clashes with the police, a smaller, more clandestine wing of the movement took another route: On November 1, 2013, two men—their faces concealed by dark-visored motorcycle helmets—hopped off their bike, ran up to a Golden Dawn office in the Athenian suburb of Neo Iraklio, and emptied their weapons into three Golden Dawn members, killing two and hospitalizing the third. An anarchist cell called the Militant People's Revolutionary Forces claimed responsibility for the attack. What's more, over the

following few months, Golden Dawn claimed to have had their offices bombed ten times.[283]

Anti-fascists seem to agree that the campaign, and particularly the assassination, struck fear into the hearts of the fascists, while street opposition increasingly restricted their ability to campaign in public.[284]

Golden Dawn suffered a far more significant blow, however, when nearly seventy party leaders and MPs, including the party founder Nikos Michaloliakos, were arrested for allegedly orchestrating violence, some of it lethal, against migrants and leftists, the charges including the murder of Fyssas.[285] The subsequent trial put a brake on Golden Dawn's momentum, as did the fact that the earlier media infatuation began to subside. The party soon found that its ability to expand beyond its base was seriously hampered.

And as the number of Golden Dawn demonstrations have declined, so too have the number of anti-fascist demonstrations. Instead, more small-group antifa actions have been carried out, such as an action in April 2017, when about a dozen members of the "Pavlos Fyssas Brigade" demolished a Golden Dawn office-front with sledgehammers in broad daylight.[286]

Nevertheless, Golden Dawn still came in third in the 2015 election, and remains the country's third party as of early 2017.[287]

Since the influx of refugees, however, most anti-fascist organizing has focused on refugee support and solidarity. One of the most significant manifestations of this has been a campaign to occupy abandoned buildings and use them to house newly arrived refugees. The first such occupation in Athens occurred in 2015 at Notara 26 in Exarcheia, an anarchist neighborhood that police pass through infrequently. Notara and other refugee squats in the area, such as an abandoned hotel in City Plaza, are organized by horizontal assemblies composed of Greek activists and the refugees themselves. A Palestinian refugee from Syria named Rami explained that "Here in the squats, there is a community. You feel like it's a family environment. In Notara, we feel like it's a big family, like it's our home."

That home was jeopardized in August 2016 though when fascists attacked Notara with tear gas canisters and attempted to burn it down.

Fortunately, no one was injured.[288] Meanwhile, police repression against squats has reached unprecedented levels over the past year, despite having the socialist Syriza in power. Five squats were evicted by the police in late 2016 and early 2017, with many anarchists and refugees being detained.[289]

"If you show solidarity with the refugees you are an antifascist," according to Malamas Sotiriou, an anarchist kickboxer with the Anti-Authoritarian Movement (AK) and organizer at the Micropolis social center in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki. When I first visited the Micropolis social center in 2012, I was astounded by the range of activities it houses. Apart from a collectively managed restaurant and bar, they had a pottery and crafts workshop, a woodworking collective, kickboxing gym, free store, and more. Over the past several years, Micropolis has welcomed many refugees into not just the center but the larger "solidarity economy" it fosters. For example, some refugees who were bakers back in Syria now run a bakery in the center, where they make sweets that they then market through the solidarity networks established over the years. Similarly, Syrian barbers now run a barbershop in Micropolis, while half the members of its kickboxing team are refugees as well.[290]

Perhaps some of the refugee kickboxers will participate in the annual antifa martial arts tournament that Sotiriou and his comrades started in 2014 in response to another tournament at which Golden Dawn MPs were invited to award the winners their medals. Sotiriou's opposing tournament in Thessaloniki attracted anti-fascist participants from across Europe eager to support the message that "martial arts are not the sports of the fascists."[291]

Since then, similar antifa martial arts tournaments have been organized in Moscow, Madrid, Prague, and Santiago, Chile. Participants often train in anti-fascist gyms like Turin's Palestra Popolare AntiFa Boxe, the Club de boxe antifa et solidaire in Marseille, or the Club de boxeo at C.S.O. La Traba in Madrid.[292]

And, at the time of this writing, a fundraising campaign to create an "anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-sexist" gym in Chicago, Illinois, is underway…with plans to call it Haymaker.

★ ★ ★

Undocumented students at the University of California at Berkeley were afraid to go outside on the evening of February 1, 2017. But it wasn't the swirling rumors in northern California that month that had them frightened—that is, that Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers were patrolling the campus looking for people without the "proper" papers to incarcerate.[293] No, the anti-immigrant violence they feared that evening did not come from the government, it came from former Breitbart News editor Milo Yiannopoulos, who had been invited to speak on campus by the Berkeley Republicans.

Yiannopoulos had emerged from relative obscurity through his championing of "Gamergate"—the online harassment of feminist and nonwhite game developers, media critics, and actors for challenging the patriarchy and white supremacy of "the geek domain."[294] Soon after, Twitter had banned Yiannopoulos for leading the relentlessly racist and misogynistic online harassment of Leslie Jones, largely because she had had the gall to "desecrate" the allegedly white, male, geek classic movie *Ghostbusters*.

By early 2017, Yiannopoulos had become perhaps the biggest celebrity of the so-called "alt-right" by using his identity as a gay immigrant to mitigate his racism, misogyny ("feminism is a mean, vindictive, spiteful, nasty, man-hating philosophy"), Islamophobia ("Muslims rape everyone"), transphobia (he "makes no apologies for protecting women and children from men who are confused about their sexual identity"), and promotion of rape culture (one of his Breitbart headlines read: " 'Slut's Remorse' is Why Rape Suspects Should be Anonymized").[295]

Enough to alarm sensible students about his appearance on campus, but when Berkeley officials announced that Yiannopoulos planned to "publicly name undocumented students," much like his public targeting of a transgender student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Juan Prieto and other undocumented students felt like "the safety of our community was at stake."[296]

As Prieto recounted, in the days leading up to the event, students had met with the chancellor, written op-eds, amassed a petition with many student and faculty signatures, and encouraged alumni to call the university in protest…all to no avail. The "university made it clear that no peaceful

methods were going to stop him from speaking," Prieto explained, and so the talk "needed to be stopped by any means necessary."

On the night of Yiannopoulos's speech, shortly before it was scheduled to begin, black-clad anti-fascists arrived at the larger ongoing demonstration and started to pull down police barricades, launch fireworks, smash windows, and spray-paint graffiti, causing what was later estimated to be $100,000 worth of damage. And what weeks of advocacy, argumentation, and public dialogue could not accomplish was instead achieved in about fifteen minutes, as the police quickly announced the cancellation of the event, citing security concerns.

Although outlets like CNN referred to the anti-fascists as "outside agitators" without any evidence, as they are wont to do, some of them were in fact Berkeley students. And certainly, some of the anti-Yiannopoulos protesters opposed the antifa tactics. But the triumphant cheering and spontaneous dance party that erupted after the cancellation attests to the fact that many students were happy with the results of those tactics—a fact largely unreported by the media. Ultimately, Prieto observes, "students' lives might have been saved that night."[297]

Protests, or the fear of protests, had already managed to shut down Yiannopoulos speeches at NYU, Iowa State, and UC Davis (where a trans student named Barbara was so terrified she fled the campus for the day), but the creative and/or destructive spectacle of the Berkeley protest triggered a sudden media interest in the notorious "antifa."[298]

Over the next month, articles appeared in *Wired, BBC News, Salon, Newsweek,* and *Al Jazeera*. An *International Business Times* headline asked "What is Antifa?" Publisher Dennis Johnson, who attacked Yiannopoulos's $250,000 book deal with Simon & Schuster on NPR's *All Things Considered*, asked me to write this book after hearing me speak about anti-fascism on NPR. And *Vice, 20/20,* and *Rolling Stone* all got in touch with me about trying to embed one of their journalists with an antifa group—something I assured them would be impossible.[299]

Yet, this recent wave of anti-fascism was not born overnight. In fact, the anti-fascist movement that grew out of ARA had never died, though it had certainly passed through a relative lull from about the middle of the 2000s

up until perhaps the start of the Trump campaign. The organizers I spoke to tend to agree that starting in the early 2000s, ARA was "a victim of its own success" as the decline in fascism lead to its own corresponding decline.[300] Among other factors, that process was accelerated by two things: the 2003 imprisonment of Matt Hale, the leader of the World Church of the Creator, for arranging the murder of a federal judge; and the 2002 death of "America's most important neo-Nazi" for some three decades, William Pierce, author of the race-war fantasy *The Turner Diaries*, and the leader of the National Alliance.[301]

As Howie, an antifa from New Jersey, put it: "At a certain point the biggest group was the National Socialist Movement, with just eighty dudes doing reenactments."[302] And as the antiwar movement against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq heated up, the focus of some organizers shifted to what they perceived to be a more imminent danger.

While ARA and similar formations persevered, and some new groups were formed during this period, such as Central Texas ARA, the anti-fascists I interviewed recounted the challenge of legitimizing their painstaking and thankless work to their comrades. For example, in the middle of the decade, Jack was part of the second incarnation of the North-East Anti-Fascists in Boston. As he spent "hours and hours and hours by myself in a room reading *Stormfront* and regional Nazi forums trying to stalk people across Internet platforms," he would have "debates with other revolutionaries not doing antifa who would say 'these guys are doofuses, we should be focusing on the prisons and institutional racism.' " While anti-fascists do quite a bit of work on those issues as well, from Jack's perspective it was "still on us to try to keep this revolutionary political fascism from being able to establish a circuit to state power."[303]

Similar challenges faced what is currently the oldest existing antifa group in the United States: Rose City Antifa (RCA) in Portland, Oregon. Founded in 2007 out of an organizing drive against the neo-Nazi skinhead festival Hammerfest, RCA was heavily influenced by the high number of Europeans in their group, reflected in the fact that they were the first American group to name itself "antifa." As an anonymous RCA member explained to me, although they organized local publicity campaigns against members of the Volksfront and worked to shut down white-power bands

like Death in June, they always considered themselves to be connected to the European movement. Yet, when they organized solidarity events for Russian antifa, other leftists said " 'Who cares? That's so remote.' " Reflecting on the seismic growth of anti-fascism a decade later, this RCA member recounted how for years their organizing was seen as a "weird niche hobby that most leftists thought was a dumb thing to do and a real waste of time." She explained that at times it was possible to generate enthusiasm about confronting a "name brand" like the KKK, but when they organized against the American Renaissance forum the response was a "big yawn."[304]

The number of "hate groups" in the country had been gradually rising since 1999, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, in large part because of growing anti-immigrant sentiment. But the 2008 election of the first black president, Barack Obama, exploded this growth, evident in the increase of antigovernment "Patriot groups" from 149 in 2008 to 1,360 in 2012.[305] Such groups found an increasingly receptive white population that was alienated by the decay of so-called traditional values, and was struggling amid the post-industrial economic crisis. After the election, they started "building a platform for someone like Trump to walk out on eight years later."[306]

After peaking in 2011, however, the number of "hate groups" gradually declined through 2014, when they hit their lowest levels since 2004. That was not because white-supremacist politics were fading, but because more and more neo-Nazis were shifting their focus to the Internet and social media, where they flourished on Reddit and 4chan.

This virtual shift was part and parcel of the new "alternative right," or "alt-right"—a term coined in 2008 by Richard Spencer, the "professional racist in khakis" who leads the white-supremacist National Policy Institute. The alt-right has developed into a big tent for a wide range of reactionaries—from "race realists" to "archeofuturists" to the oxymoronic "anarcho-capitalists"—that defines itself in opposition to establishment "cuckservatives," a racist combination of the terms "cuckold" and "conservative" implying that traditional conservatives are like pathetic white men who watch helplessly as black men have sex with their wives.[307] While the term cuckservative is certainly new, this racist motif was actually

a bedrock of white-supremacist anti-abolitionism and exploded after the Civil War. According to alt-right expert Shane Burley,

> the Alt Right is defined by racial nationalism, the inequality of people and races, the need for traditional gender roles, the necessity of hierarchy and general anti-democracy, and anti-Semitism. When compared with screeching neo-Nazis waving Swastika banners, what separates the Alt Right is its tech savvy adherent, clever memes, and upper-middle class, college educated constituencies.[308]

The core of the alt-right makes little to no effort to conceal its fascism. The popular podcast of The Right Stuff blog is called *The Daily Shoah* ("Shoah" is a term for the Holocaust, and the title is a pun on the popular leftist news/satire television program *The Daily Show*), while a site that claims to be "the world's most visited alt-right website" is called The Daily Stormer, clearly referencing the neo-Nazi Stormfront site and the Nazi Storm Troops.

Nonetheless, a significant faction of the movement has experimented with more ambiguous messaging in the guise of more intellectual, scientific, and "respectable" formats. One People's Project founder, Daryle Lamont Jenkins, who has been monitoring the far right up close and personal since 2000, argues that the shift toward concealing fascist politics began with the rise of the Minutemen anti-immigrant militia group in 2005. Their growth represented "a chance to shine for neo-Nazis, who could suddenly be part of something mainstream," Jenkins explained.[309]

This strategic shift in self-presentation has come to characterize an important segment of the alt-right. Unlike the Nazis of the 1930s, many alt-right ideologues try to circumvent societal opposition to the rhetoric of white superiority by incorporating elements of the French *nouvelle droite*—that is, by saying that inherent "biological" differences between races dictate that they should promote their own homogeneity in order to thrive. If this "natural" imperative is left unheeded, the result will be "white genocide" at the hands of a growing population of color that is set to outnumber white people in the United States by mid-century. Against the

increasingly popular leftist concept of “white privilege,” white nationalists counter that white people are no longer conquerors but *victims*.

To some extent this goal has been pursued by leaning on two connotations of the term “alternative.”

The first is the term’s association with choice. This brand of far-right politics has been portrayed as a new “alternative” for frustrated young conservatives (especially students) who “are tired of being told how to live, how to speak, what language they can use, what books they can read, how to express themselves, what opinions they’re allowed to hold,” as Milo Yiannopolous phrased it.[310] In the era of Trump, the word “alternative” bypasses normative valuation. Statements are not right or wrong, they are, according to Trump advisor Kellyanne Conway, “alternative facts.” Yiannopolous’s speeches are not thinly veiled incitements to violence, they are “alternative viewpoints.”[311] In that way, the language of the alt-right seeks to reappropriate the liberal rhetoric of diversity to rebrand “the white race” as just another interest group, rather than a historical mythology of domination—and white nationalism as just another “provocative” position that one can choose.

The second connotation is “alternative” culture. As Yiannopolous asked, “what do you do if you want to [go against] polite society? Irritate your parents? All of the things that you would have listened to the Sex Pistols in the nineties to accomplish or Madonna in the eighties, well now it’s voting for Trump and it’s cool.” “Those MAGA [Make America Great Again] hats are punk,” he added.[312] Many in the alt-right who are more consistently explicit with their fascism consider Milo Yiannopoulos, Breitbart, and other more mainstream outlets and figures to be part of the “alt-lite.”[313] (Much of Yiannopoulos’s mainstream appeal evaporated, however, when his pro-pedophilia comments surfaced.) By framing feminism, queer liberation, and antiracism as facets of a stultifying, unnatural, “PC” hegemony, the alt-right have given frustrated racist white people, especially men, a “rebellious” outlet to express what they had been thinking all along. Fascists and white nationalists have pursued this line of recruitment by infiltrating white-majority subcultures such as the skinhead scene, punk more broadly, metal, neofolk, goth, video games and fantasy genre communities (evident in Gamergate), hipster culture (Nazi hipsters known as “Nipsters”), and even

furries and bronies (men who are fans of My Little Pony).[314] This tendency shows the importance of anti-fascism in subcultural contexts.

The mainstream branding of far-right politics broke through to influence Donald Trump in the course of his successful bid for the presidency. Although he claimed to be "the least racist person that you have ever met," Trump refused to disavow former Klan leader David Duke, said undocumented Mexican migrants were "rapists," argued that a Mexican-American judge could not do his job properly, called supporters who assaulted a homeless Latino man "passionate," and tweeted an anti-Semitic, anti-Clinton meme as well as a white-supremacist meme with fake statistics about black criminality. Trump even named Steve Bannon, a former Breitbart News executive chair and admirer of the fascist ideologue Julius Evola, as CEO of his campaign, and then White House Chief Strategist. Bannon was even on the National Security Council for a brief period. Certainly, Trump did not need the alt-right to be racist. Years earlier, the Justice Department sued him twice for not renting to black people, he called for the death penalty for the wrongfully convicted (and later exonerated) youth of color known as the Central Park Five, and he led the "birtherist" movement alleging Obama's foreign origin.[315]

The alt-right did not create Trump, but Trump clearly valued its political potential enough to echo many of its talking points, and to lavish praise on its stars—such as conspiracy theorist extraordinaire Alex Jones, who Trump praised when Jones invited him onto Jones's *Infowars* radio show.

Both Trump and the alt-right have managed to tap into a widespread white conservative anxiety about the rapid demise of "traditional" white America—an anxiety about the fact that they are losing the demographic "battle" and will no longer constitute a majority of the population in a generation, that they are losing the culture war as gay marriage has become legal, that the notion of white privilege is gaining currency, that the black struggle is ascendant, that "rape culture" is being targeted, and transgender identity and rights are increasingly legitimated. Moreover, liberal elitism and neo-liberalism have hardened reactionary sentiments among many working-class whites.

The degree to which Trump's victory can be ascribed solely to a white backlash can be overstated if we ignore the fact that Trump's share of the

white electorate was nearly identical to Mitt Romney's four years earlier. That shows how in many ways Clinton lost more than Trump won.

Nevertheless, the Trump campaign created a platform for the alt-right to mobilize white anger against feminism, Black Lives Matter, Muslims, and Latinos. His victory emboldened explicit and implicit white supremacy, energizing racism beyond numbers at the polls.

His victory was also hailed by the leading lights of the European far right. Marine Le Pen announced "today the United States, tomorrow France." The leader of the German AfD argued that the victory "changes the USA, Europe, and the world." Geert Wilders rejoiced, the Austrian far-right presidential hopeful Norbert Hofer celebrated, and the UKIP leader Nigel Farage journeyed to meet with Trump in New York.[316] After Brexit, the European far right sought to portray Trump's victory as yet another step in a broad movement to reclaim "Western Civilization." This fundamental political goal may have operated below the surface for the Trump campaign, but it has been explicit for some time among the alt-right. Thus, while the rise of the alt-right to the White House certainly surprised most of the Left, it did not surprise the small groups of anti-fascists who had been putting themselves on the line to combat the far right leading up to the campaign. This had begun after the election of Obama, when a slow trickle of new groups—including NYC Antifa, created in 2010—had developed, groups who were inclined to call themselves "antifa" rather than "antiracist." This seems to have been influenced by a greater awareness of the European movement through social media.

Still, the Anti-Racist Action network persevered through groups such as the Hoosier Anti-Racist Movement (HARM) in Indiana. On May 19, 2012, a group of eighteen HARM members and other antiracists in masks and hoods carried out an audacious action to squelch regional fascist organizing. Allegedly, they burst into a Chicago restaurant to physically disrupt a meeting of the "Illinois European Heritage Association," which was composed of white supremacists from the National Socialist Movement, the Council of Conservative Citizens, and other groups. Following the action, five antiracists were arrested and charged with "felony mob action." Alex Stuck, John Tucker, and brothers Jason, Cody, and Dylan Sutherlin were eventually sentenced to between forty-two months and six years, though all

of them were released by September 2014. The thirteen other antiracists were never apprehended, although the police arrested two of the Nazis, one for illegal semiautomatic weapons and the other for an outstanding warrant for child pornography.[317]

In September 2014, Chicago hosted the first annual conference of the new Torch Network, which inherited the legacy of the ARA Network. It now claims twelve chapters including Philly Antifa, South Side Chicago Anti-Racist Action, Rose City Antifa, and Atlanta Antifascists.

The Atlanta group, like many current antifa groups, formed in 2016 as a response to increased activity from the National Socialist Movement, League of the South, and the Traditionalist Youth Network. Iggy, one of their members who was active with ARA back in the eighties and nineties, commented that today "they're not in-your-face like when I started." Instead the Atlanta Antifascists have waged a public propaganda campaign against the stickers and posters of the white-supremacist Identity Europa, who "try to hide their identity to be as anonymous as possible." According to Iggy, in some ways their campaigns had been too successful because they covered fascist propaganda "so quickly that people don't know it's a problem." To remedy that problem, they started posting stickers that said "Racist propaganda was here."[318]

While anti-fascist organizing and research was developing, so too were public confrontations. On February 27, 2016, Klansmen stabbed three antiracists amid brawls that developed at a KKK demonstration in Anaheim.[319] In June, seven anti-fascists were stabbed, two of them critically, by members of the white-supremacist Traditionalist Workers Party and the Golden State Skinheads during melees at a demonstration in Sacramento.[320] Antifa Sacramento formed the same year.

These clashes occurred in a larger context wherein the militancy of anti-Trump protests was escalating. More and more protesters were infiltrating Trump speeches to disrupt the proceedings, and, on March 11, 2016, so many infiltrated his planned speech at the University of Illinois at Chicago that organizers were forced to cancel when fistfights and shouting escalated between the two sides.

But interest in, and enthusiasm for, anti-fascism grew after Trump's victory, and the wave of racist violence that it produced. While countering institutional oppression remained vitally important, many came to believe that genuine resistance to Trump also necessitated developing forces to counteract street-level fascist violence. Thus, many new groups have been formed.

One is Antifa Nebraska. Although small, the multiracial group scored a major victory within months of its formation by doxxing Cooper Ward, cohost of *The Daily Shoah* podcast, who was living in Omaha. Antifa Nebraska printed thousands of flyers with his name, photo, and information on his Nazism and plastered them around town, forcing him to drop out of college, take down his social media, and go into hiding. This action provoked internal conflict within Cooper's political group, American Vanguard, which accused him of being a snitch.[321]

Similarly, the Chelsea East Boston Antifascist Coalition (CEBAC) was created the day after Trump's election by a diverse group of activists with experience in reproductive justice, immigrants' rights, and queer organizing.[322]

Another is Smash Racism DC. One of the group's organizers, a longtime antifa named Chepe, explained how the mostly black and Latino Smash Racism is a "loose affinity group" that is working toward creating a local network of similar groups, in order to "make DC and the surrounding area too unsafe for outright neo-Nazi groups and fascists." To expand its reach, Smash Racism decided to be more outward-facing than many antifa groups. In April 2017, for example, it held a public "Antifa Unmasked" event to explain "Anarchism 101," the "History of Black-Led Anti-Fascist Struggles," and other topics.

The group may be better known, though, for its more visible work the night before Donald Trump's inauguration, when it organized a demonstration outside of the alt-right "Deploraball" celebration. Fascists in tuxes were pelted with eggs and several MAGA hats were set on fire. The next morning, an "anti-capitalist and anti-fascist" black bloc—that is, a mass of anonymous, black-clad militants—set off from Logan Circle to disrupt "business as usual," while a man whom liberals had bemoaned as a literal fascist was being sworn into the White House. Some of the black

bloc, though certainly not all, engaged in targeted property destruction of corporate enterprises to smash Trump's "facade of legitimacy." Most notably, the glass storefronts of Starbucks and Bank of America were rapidly demolished, similar destruction forced a McDonald's to shut down, and ATMs and other corporate property were spray-painted or destroyed, causing an estimated $100,000 in damages. The most iconic moment of the day may have been when a limousine was set ablaze.

Overall 214 people were arrested and charged with felony riot, inciting to riot, and conspiracy to riot, charges amounting to potential sentences of seventy-five years per person. Needless to say, this exceeds any precedent for sentencing for such charges. As documented by Natasha Lennard, a journalist who was at the forefront of explaining antifa and black bloc strategies, the police are not even alleging that most of those arrested actually damaged anything. Instead, the majority were charged with having "willfully incited or urged others to engage in the riot."[323] The mass arrest and excessive charges are clearly an effort to curb disruptive protest, and are in line with recently proposed legislation in eighteen states that would criminalize blocking roadways, wearing masks, and other forms of protest. Laws under consideration in Tennessee, North Carolina, and North Dakota would even allow motorists to plow into protesters in the street.[324]

Perhaps the most significant public incident in recent American anti-fascism occurred later, on Inauguration Day, when a black-clad anti-fascist punched the white supremacist Richard Spencer in the face in broad daylight while he was giving a sidewalk interview explaining the meaning of Pepe the Frog, an alt-right mascot. (He was actually punched again, by someone else, later the same day.) It became the punch heard round the Internet, as a video clip of the incident went viral. Not only was the punching video set to a wide array of pop music, from Whitney Houston to Justin Bieber, and collected on the Twitter handle @PunchedToMusic, *Saturday Night Live*'s Weekend Update made fun of it and a *New York Times* headline asked "Is it O.K. to punch a Nazi?"[325] An alt-right icon who was attempting to cloak his Nazism beneath a "respectable" intellectual veneer had been trivialized into the latest meme, another source of "lulz" for the voracious millennial virtual appetite. If Rock Against Racism promoted "NF=No Fun," then Spencer getting punched to beats of DMX

made the alt-right “alt-wrong” for many young people, even if only for a moment.

Perhaps more importantly, the incident made a significant contribution toward legitimizing anti-fascism and, more specifically, the idea of physically confronting fascists and white supremacists.

Meanwhile, there would be no rest for Spencer as the face of American fascism. On April 8, Smash Racism DC and other anti-fascists confronted Spencer and his supporters when they gathered to protest Trump’s missile strikes against Syria. Spencer was “glitter bombed” (unexpectedly covered with glitter) and chased through the streets as he fled.

While some liberal commentators were bemoaning the “incivility” and affront to “freedom of speech” that the Nazi punch allegedly represented, they entirely ignored the fact that an alt-right activist shot an anti-fascist named “Hex” at a protest outside of a Milo Yiannopoulos speech at the University of Washington on Inauguration Day. Hex spent three weeks in the ICU and lost his gall bladder and part of his liver, but he recovered.

Hex, it’s worth noting, is a member of the General Defense Committee (GDC) of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) labor union—aka the Wobblies, one of America’s most famous and long-standing unions—which has become an emerging outlet for anti-fascism. Although the revolutionary syndicalist IWW originally organized the GDC in 1917 to support members who were jailed during the red scares of World War I,[326] starting in 2011 Wobblies from the Twin Cities envisioned a more proactive GDC that would not “wait until the attack came to organize and fight it.” Among their first actions was a disruption of an event by the Holocaust denier David Irving, and a counterdemonstration to a Confederate flag display event.

More recently, after Minneapolis police killed Philando Castile and Jamar Clark, Black Lives Matter organized an eighteen-day occupation outside of the fourth precinct. The GDC was one of several groups that helped to provide security for the occupation. These and other actions helped to diversify the membership of the IWW local. As of April 2017, the Twin Cities GDC had a membership of 139.[327]

Internally, the GDC operates on a working-group model—that is, it’s composed of a series of internal groups that focus on different aspects of

organizing. One of the GDC's working groups is a closed "antifa working group" that conducts research and suggests actions to the larger body. Erik D., one of the original organizers of the Twin Cities GDC, explained that at first, the group was critiqued by some of the more traditional antifa for being "reckless" or "liberal," but he clarified that he believes that both small-group and popular anti-fascism are "absolutely necessary." In his eyes, the goal was to "move from a ninja anti-fascism to a popular mass-based anti-fascism."

Kieran, another Twin Cities GDC organizer, is one of the founders of Anti-Racist Action. Like Erik, Kieran believes that it won't "just be a squadron of elite anti-fascists carrying out a technical operation that's gonna win this."

"More and more," he explained, "it's become important to me to try to integrate anti-fascism into a broader conception of working-class self-defense…so that it is not reduced to one extremist gang taking on another extremist gang." Despite these positions, Kieran maintains that the ARA model and the GDC model are "not mutually exclusive…physical confrontation is still very much on the menu."[328]

The success of the Twin Cities GDC spread this model of "militant and popular" anti-fascism around the country in the wake of the election.[329] For example, a newly formed GDC helped disrupt a neo-Confederate event and organize a large demonstration against the KKK in North Carolina. "Not everyone who is anti-fascist is gonna be able to mask up and go smash things," explained Joe from the North Carolina GDC. "There have to be roles for elderly folks, disabled folks who are not going to be able to hit the streets."[330]

A new GDC was also organized in Baltimore immediately following Trump's election. Almost immediately, the group successfully pressured a local VFW to cancel a white-power rock show. "It's wrong to think that the 97 percent of antifascist activity that doesn't involve a violent confrontation has to be done by people up for a violent confrontation," stressed ARA veteran and current GDC organizer Murray.[331]

Inspired by the Twin Cities GDC and the legacy of the Black Panthers, members of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America

in Burlington, Vermont created the Workers Defense Guard in late 2015 as a popular and militant anti-fascist vehicle for working-class self-defense, in response to Ku Klux Klan threats against unionists in their city.[332]

Another new popular anti-fascist formation is Redneck Revolt (RnR) which seeks to reclaim the historical association between the term "redneck" and the red bandannas of the armed rebels of the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain in West Virginia—the largest labor uprising in American history—in order to "incite a movement amongst white working people" against white supremacy. RnR draws inspiration from the legacy of the Young Patriots of the sixties and seventies. The origins of RnR date back to the creation of the John Brown Gun Club by members of the Kansas Mutual Aid Collective in Lawrence, Kansas around 2005 or 2006. In 2009 one of the group's members moved to Colorado and helped create a new group in the same spirit called Redneck Revolt, but it died out soon thereafter. Still, with the Trump campaign gaining steam, one of the group's cofounders, Tyler, told me that it was "quite jarring to have a billionaire like Trump claiming to speak for white working-class folks." Therefore, RnR was reformed in early June 2016 as a national organization that counted twenty-six branches as of April 2017.

RnR organizers have had great success entering "spaces where white nationalists recruit to de-recruit people," such as at gun shows, Tyler claims. "People at gun shows generally hate the government more than me so there's great places to start" recruiting, he says. RnR has developed a membership that includes many veterans, former Republicans, and even former three percenter militiamen, who, Tyler says, told him RnR is "what originally I thought the three percenters were."

Given how the "Left has ceded guns to the Right," as Tyler claims, the goal of RnR is to "legitimize community defense and guns on the Left." He also added that although RnR's goals "are much the same" as antifa groups, its members wear their bandannas around their necks, not over their faces, and aim to be "as upfront about who [they] are and what [they]'re doing as possible." Despite its focus on the white working class, about 30 percent of the group's membership are people of color.

Other leftist gun clubs/community self-defense groups include the Maoist Red Guards in Austin, Texas, the Huey P. Newton Gun Club, which

includes eight organizations around the country, and the LGBTQ Trigger Warning (TW) gun club in Rochester, New York. Oscar of TW explained that the group started right after Trump's election, in response to a rise in local homophobia and racism. Beyond developing the "skills necessary to defend our community," TW organizers are working toward "taking a holistic approach to anti-fascism" that includes political education about the root causes of fascism. Ultimately, they aim to "challenge the notion of queer people being weak and helpless."[333]

With or without guns, anti-fascists have been out on the streets confronting a series of MAGA marches that have provided public organizing platforms for the alt-right. A local branch of RnR called the Phoenix John Brown Gun Club, for example, counterprotested a MAGA rally on March 25 with rifles, alongside an armed group of Arizona Brown Berets and members of Anti-Fascist Action Phoenix. On March 26, Philly Antifa and their allies were aided in their efforts to shut down a pro-Trump march by the arrival of hundreds of kids on bikes who raced through the streets blocking traffic. The police cut the Trump rally short for "safety" reasons.[334]

The most serious clashes, however, have occurred in Berkeley, California, which became hotly contested territory in the wake of the Milo Yiannopoulos incident. On March 4, when pro-Trump rallies were scheduled around the country, brawls erupted in Berkeley between alt-right demonstrators and antifascists, who seemed to get the better of most of the day's conflicts. News reports featured photos of many bloodied alt-right demonstrators.[335] In an effort to avenge this defeat, white nationalists organized a follow-up event in the same location for April 15, featuring a number of known alt-right speakers including Lauren Southern, a "Canadian version of Milo Yiannopoulos." Members of various far-right militia groups from across the country attended, such as the Oath Keepers and the three percenters, along with fascist biker gangs who showed up seemingly looking for a fight at what the Northern California Anti-Racist Action billed as "the biggest racist alt-right rally of 2017."[336]

Although orange netting initially kept the two sides apart, once the two crowds spilled out from the park, the police seemed to disappear, and hours of massive street brawls ensued. A member of the Pastel Bloc, an anti-

fascist medic group that formed in the wake of the Yiannopoulos protest, explained that this time the fascists were much better prepared, despite seeing twice as many knives in the crowd compared to March 4.[337] Predictably, the mainstream media reduced the day to a battle between pro- and anti-Trump factions, while ignoring the Nazi salutes, anti-Semitic signs, and the attendance of the misogynistic and violent Proud Boys.

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American antifa culture and organizing has also started to grow among fan clubs of professional soccer teams. One example is Cosmopolitan Anti-Fascist Action, an antifa group largely composed of Central and South American immigrants that keeps homophobia and transphobia out of their section during New York Cosmos games. They organized a campaign to expose the presence of a far-right ultras group led by white-power skinheads from Poland among the fans of NYCFC (the New York City Football Club), and they have helped organize anti-Trump protests. Similar groups exist for the New York Red Bulls, as well as the teams in Portland, Seattle, and Montreal.[338]

Meanwhile, in Europe, some of the very fiercest anti-fascist conflicts have erupted in the context of football. While different teams have had their own political, religious, and ethnic connotations since the start of the twentieth century, the sport's relation to modern antifa politics can be traced to the late 1970s. That was when the National Front was ascendant in Britain and its operatives attempted to recruit at games. The Anti-Nazi League—and later Anti-Fascist Action—took leading roles in pushing back against the sale of fascist newspapers at games; they also organized antifa supporters' groups, such as the Reds Against the Nazis, which was composed of Manchester United Fans (members of Red Action were overwhelmingly Manchester United fans).[339]

In the late 1980s, AFA Leeds organized a campaign against fascist paper sales at Leeds United matches and released a report on fascist hooliganism called "Terror on the Terraces" that brought public attention to the far-right threat. As AFA Leeds cofounder Paul Bowman recounted, these efforts led to the publication of the first antiracist fan zine in Britain, *Marching Altogether*, and the formation of the country's first antiracist football fan

group, Leeds Fans United Against Racism and Fascism. By the early nineties, organized British fascism had been effectively pushed out of football, and antiracism became a mainstream stance in the sport.[340]

During the same era, the anti-fascists, squatters, and *Autonomen* of Hamburg, Germany, unofficially turned FC St. Pauli into perhaps the most iconic anti-fascist team in the world. Located in the middle of the city's red light district, near ongoing battles to defend the squatted houses of the Hafenstraße, St. Pauli was imbued with the counterculture and rebellion of the district and endowed with its famous unofficial skull and crossbones logo. In 1993, St. Pauli fans created the Association of Antifascist Football Fans and have subsequently been active in other initiatives such as Queer Football Fanclubs. Over the years, St. Pauli fans have formed bonds with anti-fascist fans of Celtic, AC Bilbao, and other clubs as part of a more generalized antifa hooligan culture.[341]

In Thessaloniki, Greece, anarchist fans of the PAOK club formed the Gate 4 supporters' group while fans of the Hercules team formed Autonomous Gate 10 as an anti-fascist club. The small Athenian professional team Panionios has also embraced an anti-fascist position. They invited refugee children to their games declaring that "Panionios means refugees." Their anti-fascist supporters' club is called the Panthers. On the other side, Olympiakos fans are known as Golden Dawn supporters. Beyond professional football, in 2012 the Antifa League of Athens was created with nine teams, but it has grown larger every year since.[342]

Elsewhere, in February 2017 the anti-fascist Bukaneros supporters' club of Rayo Vallekano from Madrid managed to pressure their team to send back a fascist Ukrainian player they had recently acquired. The Antifascist Football Tournament in Torún, Poland, the Anti-Racism World Cup in Belfast, the Poor People's World Cup in Cape Town, the Libertarian Football Cup in Stockholm, the Antifa Soccer Cup in Lünen, Germany, and the Kick Racism festival in Udine, Italy, are examples of current and former anti-fascist and antiracist tournaments across the world.[343]

Not all antifa football fans have outlets for their sports activism, however. For years the autonomist anti-fascist Niccolò participated in the "neutral" AC Milan supporters' group Forza Leone, until the club closed down in 2005. Strangely enough, Niccolò and other antifa mingled with future

activists of the fascist CasaPound. Over the last ten years, however, far-right ultras have almost entirely taken over Italian football. In Milan, the strongest fascist ultra group is Lealtà azione, which joined the Hammerskin Nations network. According to Niccolò, the fascist ultras and CasaPound militants are often employed by the Mafia as soldiers. Anti-fascist football fans tend to join neutral fan clubs.[344]

Yet, the vast majority of football hooligans are apolitical. Jelle, a former Milan catwalk model and Ajax hooligan from Amsterdam from the early 2000s, described for me how his crew would attack anyone who "looked like a Nazi" for wearing brands like Fred Perry or Lonsdale, but "half the time it was bullshit." To some extent they had an "apolitical anti-fascism" that sometimes led them to team up with anti-fascists. "If you think it's scary for some antifa to come beat you up," Jelle wryly recounted, "try some football hooligans who are proper criminals." Yet, they would "almost as easily turn to try to beat up the antifa guys" if they could not reach the Nazis. While overall there is not a strong connection between football and politics in the Netherlands, Jelle explained, over the past few years sections of some hooligan groups have developed relationships with the Far Right and have "gone after migration centers" in Utrecht and elsewhere.[345]

Most Russian football ultras are apolitical as well, according to Vladimir, the organizer of a 2015 anti-fascist football tournament in Moscow involving teams from Russia and Belarus. Nonetheless, he pointed out that the leaders of the ultra groups "push their political ideology," thereby shifting ultra allegiances toward one side or the other. An ultra named Petr from Yekaterinburg lamented in 2015 that "the football stadiums have become the mainstay of the Nazis…similar to Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania." Nazis are said to have won control of the hooligan scene in the mid to late nineties. The only openly anti-fascist ultra groups existed among Caucasian teams like Spartak Nalchik because of the Russian Nazi hatred stemming from the wars in Chechnya. Even creating "neutral" fan clubs can be dangerous, as it was for the anti-fascist fan of Dynamo Moscow, Ilya Dzhaparidze, who was murdered by Nazis for creating an apolitical group.[346]

As in other former Soviet bloc countries, neo-Nazi violence broke out in Russia in the 1990s. By the end of the decade, SHARP and RASH groups

were formed in Moscow, setting the groundwork for a small but tenacious antifa movement moving into the next decade. The antifa movement got going around the middle of the 2000s in St. Petersburg, where the magazine *Anti-Fascist Motive* was published. Over the course of the decade, Russian antifa faced perhaps the most violent neo-Nazi movement on the continent. At least nine antifa were murdered by neo-Nazis from 2005 to 2009, including Timur Kacharava, Alexander R'uhin, Alexey Krylov, Stanislav Markelov, Anastasia Baburova, Ivan Khutorskoy, Ilya Borodaenko, and Fedor Filatov, and bombs were set off at the homes of anti-fascist militants. More recently, in February 2017, an antifa punk named Igor was murdered outside a punk show after he asked neo-Nazis to stop saluting.[347] The anti-fascist struggle in Russia is all the more difficult given the authoritarian politics of the Kremlin and a range of collaboration between authorities and various far-right groups.

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Although it is beyond the geographical scope of this book, it would be a grave injustice to write a book about international anti-fascism in 2017 without at least touching upon the antifascist core of the greatest popular revolution of our times: the Rojava Revolution in Northern Syria.

The seeds of the revolution's ideology were sown by Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), when he read the anarchist theorist Murray Bookchin, the historian Benedict Anderson, and other writers during his life sentence in Turkish prison. As the years passed, Bookchin's notion of libertarian municipalism and Anderson's dissection of the nation as an "imagined community" influenced Öcalan to shift the PKK away from its origins as a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party struggling for Kurdish national liberation toward a rejection of nationalism and the hierarchy of the state, and to embrace horizontalist principles that he called "Democratic Confederalism."[348]

When Syrian president Assad withdrew his forces from the country's north in 2012 amid the ongoing civil war, the task of fighting off ISIS in the region the Kurds call Rojava fell to the Kurdish Protection Units (YPG) and the affiliated Women's Protection Units (YPJ), which had been established by the Syrian PKK affiliate Partiya Yekita Demokrat (PYD) years earlier.

By late 2014, ISIS controlled most of the region and was busy laying siege to the Kurdish enclave of Kobanî. On January 27, 2015, however, this under-resourced, socialist feminist militia, which eschews ranks and elects its commanders democratically, shocked the world by defeating ISIS in Kobanî.

As the Kurdish writer Dilar Dirik explained, the symbol of this victory became the young Kurdish revolutionary woman Arîn Mîrkan who blew herself up near a strategic hill to rescue fellow Kurdish fighters and capture an ISIS position. Apart from ISIS, the revolution has been under attack from the Syrian Army, Free Syrian Army, and the Turkish state. In 2015, the YPJ and YPG became the largest forces in the secular, multireligious Syrian Democratic Forces, which also included Arabs, Syriacs, Turkmen, and others.[349] One of the YPJ/YPG's most important interventions in the region was the dramatic rescue of tens of thousands of Yazidis who had taken refuge on Mount Sinjar amid the ISIS genocide against this ancient religious minority.[350]

As the revolution developed, the Democratic Society Movement (TEV-Dem), formed by the PYD and other forces, started to govern the newly autonomous cantons of Rojava, about the size of Connecticut with a population of 4.6 million, according to Öcalan's horizontal and feminist doctrines. Local communes of three hundred members federated into larger districts that were organized into "people's councils." Decision-making flows from the bottom up, and all bodies were required to be composed of at least 40 percent women.[351] The battle against the Islamic State and the plight of the Kurdish people started to draw foreign volunteers around 2014. The "first internationalist team" of snipers was formed during the defense of Kobanî. It included Italian, Spanish, British, and American fighters. While many of the early Western volunteers were evangelical Christians, such as the members of the Sons of Liberty International, subsequently more and more of the volunteers were leftists, according to an anarchist internationalist in Rojava I managed to interview. In his opinion, most of the Turks are Marxist-Leninists or Maoists, but the Europeans are pretty evenly split between Marxists and anarchists. Regardless of their politics, however, he was adamant that Kurds and internationals alike

consider both ISIS and Turkish president Erdogan to be fascist, and the defense of the Rojava Revolution to be an anti-fascist struggle.

Inspired by the anti-fascist legacy of the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War, in June 2015 the International Freedom Battalion (IFB) was established in Rojava. It includes Turkish communist organizations, such as the MLKP and the TKP-ML/TİKKO, and national sections such as the French anarchist Henri Krasucki Brigade, the Greek anarcho-communist Revolutionary Union for Internationalist Solidarity, and the Bob Crow Brigade for British and Irish fighters.[352] In December 2016, the multinational Antifascist International Tabur (Kurdish term for battalion) joined the IFB. Its symbol is a rising phoenix emblazoned with the triangle of the International Brigades, and its members often pose with the anti-fascist flag.

By all accounts the number of foreign volunteers is not very high, but many of them have paid the ultimate price for their anti-fascism: As of February 2017, more than twenty foreign volunteers had been killed in the conflict and far more Kurds, Yazidis, and members of other regional ethnic groups have died in the fight against fascisms on all sides. In the words of the Antifascist International Tabur, “We take our symbol from the revolutionaries who fought in Spain, in 1936, for a world without borders, without shadows and without fear—History did not defeat them. Their dreams did not die, but are now reborn with us, with each comrade, who now fights in Rojava. As a phoenix always rises from the ashes, so the fire of the Revolution, will continue to burn forever.”[353]

FOUR

FIVE HISTORICAL LESSONS

FOR ANTI-FASCISTS

This chapter briefly analyzes five lessons that many antifascists draw, or, I believe, should draw from history. Each lesson begins with a more factual description of a given phenomenon before moving into an anti-fascist interpretation of the historical facts in question. Like all historical phenomena, these facts are subject to multiple interpretations. These are not the only lessons from this history, but they shed light on some of the historically informed underpinnings of antifascism.

1. FASCIST REVOLUTIONS HAVE NEVER SUCCEEDED. FASCISTS GAINED POWER LEGALLY.

First, some important facts: Mussolini's march on Rome was merely a spectacle legitimizing his prior invitation to form a government. Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 failed miserably. His eventual accession to power came when President Hindenburg appointed him chancellor. The Enabling Act that granted him complete power was passed by parliament.

For militant anti-fascists, those historical facts have cast doubt on the liberal formula for opposing fascism. That formula essentially amounts to faith in reasoned debate to counteract fascist ideas, in the police to counteract fascist violence, and in the institutions of parliamentary government to counteract fascist attempts to seize power. There is no doubt that sometimes this formula has worked. There is also no doubt that sometimes it has not.

Fascism and Nazism emerged as emotional, antirational appeals grounded in masculine promises of renewed national vigor. While political argumentation is always important in appealing to the potential popular base of fascism, its sharpness is blunted when confronted with ideologies that reject the terms of rational debate. Rationality did not stop the Fascists or the Nazis. While reason is always necessary, it is unfortunately insufficient on its own from an anti-fascist perspective.

Thus, it's no surprise that history shows that parliamentary government is not always a barrier to fascism. To the contrary, on several occasions it has been more of a red carpet. When interwar economic and political elites felt sufficiently threatened by the prospect of revolution, they turned to figures like Mussolini and Hitler to ruthlessly crush dissent and protect private property. While it would be a mistake to entirely reduce fascism to a last resort of an endangered capitalist system, that element of its composition played an important, and at times decisive, role in its fortunes. When interwar authoritarian leaders felt much less threatened, they often implemented fascistic policies from above. For most revolutionaries, this

means that anti-fascism must necessarily be anticapitalist. As long as capitalism continues to foment class struggle, they argue, fascism will always loom in the background as an authoritarian solution to popular upheaval.

As for the police counteracting fascist violence—at times the police have arrested and persecuted fascists, yet the historical record shows that along with the military they have also been among the most eager for a "return to order." Studies show that high percentages of police voted for Golden Dawn and the *Front National* over the past few years.[354] In the United States, it is clear that many police welcomed Trump as a "Blue Lives Matter" president who would allow law enforcement to continue its harassment and murder of communities of color unimpeded. Recently it was revealed that the FBI has been investigating alarmingly (though not surprisingly) high levels of white-supremacist infiltration into law enforcement for decades.[355] Moreover, regardless of the composition of the U.S. police force, the fact that it developed out of Southern slave patrols and Northern opposition to the labor movement gives us insight into its role in the white-supremacist criminal "justice" system.

All of which is to say that the fact that fascist revolts have always failed should not lessen concerns about fascist insurrectionism. The fascist "strategy of tension" in Italy, the development of the lone-wolf concept of "leaderless resistance" promoted by the American Klan leader Louis Beam, and the fascist armed struggle that developed on both sides of the Euromaidan conflicts in Ukraine attest to the material danger of insurrectionary fascist violence.[356] Nevertheless, historically fascism has gained entry to the halls of power not by smashing down the gates, but by convincing the gatekeepers to politely swing them open.

2. TO VARYING DEGREES, MANY INTERWAR ANTI-FASCIST LEADERS AND THEORISTS ASSUMED THAT FASCISM WAS SIMPLY A VARIANT OF TRADITIONAL COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY POLITICS. THEY DID NOT TAKE IT SERIOUSLY ENOUGH UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.

As long as there has been revolution, there has been counterrevolution. For every storming of the Bastille there was a Thermidor. After the Paris Commune, hundreds were executed and thousands imprisoned and deported. More than five thousand political prisoners were executed and thirty-eight thousand imprisoned after the failed 1905 Russian Revolution, which also witnessed 690 anti-Semitic pogroms that killed more than three thousand.[357] European radicals and ethnic minorities were by no means alien to the violence of traditional reaction.

Yet, fascism represented something new. Fascist ideological, technological, and bureaucratic innovations created a vehicle for the imperialism and genocide that Europe had exported around the world to bring its wars of extermination home.

Unsurprisingly, many leftist commentators initially conceptualized fascism within the parameters of existing counterrevolutionary forces. According to the Workers' Socialist Federation, Italian Fascists were "in the strictest sense a White Guard," referring to the counterrevolutionaries of the Russian Revolution. The Communist Party of Great Britain called them "the Italian Black and Tans," referring to the British counterrevolutionary forces in the Irish War of Independence. In the 1920s, some Marxists used Hungarian Communist Georg Lukacs's analysis of "white terror" to argue that Mussolini's *squadristi* were merely a non-ideological bulwark of the ruling class.[358]

On the other hand, a number of commentators did highlight fascism's unique features. They recognized the novelty of its nationalist flirtation with

socialism, its populist elitism. They observed how previously antagonistic sectors like traditional landowners and bourgeois capitalists could form a united counterrevolutionary movement.[359] The Marxist focus on the underlying class dynamics of fascism revealed elements of this puzzling new doctrine that centrist observers failed to grasp. Yet that focus also tended to limit the potential danger that fascism could pose to the confines of its alleged role as bodyguard to the ruling class, and so Marxists and many others therefore failed to anticipate how the scope of its violence would greatly extend beyond that which was "necessary" to safeguard capitalist enterprise. Moreover, although interwar fascism developed out of mainly middle-class constituencies with upper-class backing, as fascist movements grew they sometimes, though not always, attracted working-class support—a fact that Marxists were slow to come to terms with fully.

Regardless of the content of their analysis, however, many socialist and communist politicians did not lead as if the very existence of their movements hung in the balance. The Italian socialists signed the Pact of Pacification with Mussolini in 1921, and neither they nor the communists thought that Mussolini's rise to power represented anything more than the latest rightward swing in the age-old rhythmic pendulum of bourgeois parliamentary politics. In that way, they were not entirely dissimilar to the majority of Spanish socialists who collaborated with Primo de Rivera's somewhat fascistic military government in the 1920s. In Germany, the communists believed that fascism had already arrived when the "presidential governments" of the early 1930s started to rule by decree. Yet, neither the allegedly fascist "presidential governments" nor the chancellorship of Adolf Hitler convinced party leadership that they faced an existential threat. For the KPD leadership, fascism did not call for resistance by any means necessary, but patience. Their slogan was "First Hitler, then us." At the turn of the century, leftists had reason to anticipate that eras of repression would come and go. Fascism changed the rules of the game.

The first substantive recognition of the essence of the fascist peril came with the "February Uprising" of 1934 when Austrian socialists fought back against the authoritarian chancellor Dollfuss's raids on socialist centers (which were instigated by Mussolini). The uprising was brutally suppressed, leaving two hundred dead, three hundred wounded, and the

party outlawed.[360] Yet, their bravery inspired the Spanish socialist miners who rebelled later that year in Asturias. Their slogan was “Better Vienna than Berlin,” where Hitler’s rise to power was not opposed by force. By the time the Spanish Civil War broke out, anti-fascism was widely understood to be a desperate struggle against extermination.

The tendency of leftist theorists and politicians to excessively conceptualize fascism based on the paradigm of traditional counterrevolution hindered the ability of the Left to adjust to the new threat it faced. Since the shape of resistance must always be calibrated against that which is being resisted, it is incumbent upon anti-fascists to continually reevaluate their theoretical, strategic, and tactical arsenals based on shifts in the ideology and praxis of their far-right adversaries. Matthew N. Lyons put this lesson into practice by critiquing writers who argue that the “alt-right” should merely be called neo-Nazis. While many alt-right are clearly neo-Nazis, Lyons argues that this “embodies the unfortunate idea that white-supremacist politics are basically all the same…that we don’t need to understand our enemy.”[361] Conceiving of the enemy in terms of a dated paradigm cost interwar anti-fascists dearly. At some point, the evolution of the Far Right might even mean transcending the framework of “fascism” altogether, as we move further and further away from the twentieth century.

It is essential for anti-fascists to develop a clear and precise understanding of fascism. Yet in order to understand the robust and flexible nature of anti-fascist politics we must recognize the relationship between two of the many registers of anti-fascism: analytical and moral.

The analytical register consists of mobilizing historically informed definitions and interpretations of fascism to craft anti-fascist strategy suited to the specific challenges of facing ideologically fascist groups and movements. Methods of confronting neo-Nazi groups may not make sense against other far-right formations. Understanding the difference between them should inform strategic and tactical choices.

The moral register developed out of the rhetorical power of the “fascist” epithet—of calling someone or something fascist—in the postwar period. It comes into play when the antifascist lens is applied to phenomena that may not be fascist, technically speaking, but are *fascistic*.

For example, were the Black Panthers wrong to call cops who killed black people with impunity “fascist pigs” if they did not personally hold fascist beliefs or if the American government was not literally fascist? At a Madrid antifa demonstration, I saw a rainbow flag with the slogan “homophobia is fascism.” Does the existence of non-fascist homophobes invalidate the argument? Were the guerrillas who fought against Franco in Spain or Pinochet in Chile misguided to call their struggle “anti-fascist” if, according to most historians, these regimes were not technically fascist?

As we have discussed, it is important to analyze each of these cases and many more in order to develop a finely tuned analysis. Yet, the moral register of anti-fascism understands how “fascism” has become a moral signifier that those struggling against a variety of oppressions have utilized to highlight the ferocity of the political foes they have faced and the elements of continuity they share with actual fascism. Franco’s Spain may have been more of a traditionalist Catholic military regime than fascism per se, but such differences mattered little to those who were hunted down by the Civil Guard.

The challenges of defining fascism make the line between these two registers blurry. Moreover, the analytical register contains a moral critique just as the moral register entails a loose analysis of the relationship between a given source of oppression and fascism. While it is true that at a certain point the “fascist” epithet loses some of its power if it is applied too widely, a key component of anti-fascism is to organize against both fascist and fascistic politics in solidarity with all those who suffer and struggle. Matters of definition should influence our strategies and tactics, not our solidarity.

3. FOR IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL REASONS, SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP WAS OFTEN SLOWER TO ACCURATELY ASSESS THE THREAT OF FASCISM, AND SLOWER TO ADVOCATE MILITANT ANTI-FASCIST RESPONSES, THAN THEIR PARTIES' RANK-AND-FILE MEMBERSHIP.

Since many socialists and communists initially considered fascism to be a variant of traditional counterrevolutionary politics, they focused on each other far more than their fascist enemies. Both factions reasoned that if they could unite the proletariat under their leadership, it wouldn't matter what right-wing obstacles they might face.

Thus, while some rank-and-file socialists stayed with the Arditi del Popolo to fight against the Black Shirts in Italy in the early 1920s, the party leadership pulled out in order to continue along its legalistic electoral path. When that path was definitively blocked, the party struggled to change course.

And similarly throughout the era: German socialists adhered to a strictly legalistic course in the 1920s and '30s despite the increasing unease of party members. Although socialists in the Reichsbanner and later the Iron Front pushed for more aggressive measures, the torpid party apparatus was ill-equipped to consider alternative strategies. Likewise, the rank and file of Austrian socialism struggled to push their party leadership toward militant self-defense in the face of a far-right onslaught in the 1920s and '30s.[362] In Britain, rank-and-file members of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress physically confronted fascists in the street despite their leaders' admonitions. Labour leadership even condemned its members who participated in the Battle of Cable Street—when various groups confronted Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts marching through the Jewish section of London's East End—and refused to support the many Labour Party members who joined the International Brigades in Spain.[363] As historian Larry Ceplair argued, the social democrats "had played the parliamentary

game too long, and [their] leaders had become ideologically and psychologically incapable of organizing, ordering, or approving armed resistance or preventative revolution."[364]

Nonetheless, many individual socialists, who were far less encumbered by legalistic party ideology and master-plan electoral strategy, seem to have been more sensitive to changing conditions on the ground and far more eager to take the fight to fascism.

In the early 1920s, the Communist International believed that the most pressing task for the revolution was to draw a clear and antagonistic distinction between Marxism-Leninism and social democracy so they could lead the insurgent wave that seemed to be engulfing the continent. This goal returned to the fore with the start of the Comintern's "third period" in 1928. The Leninist organizational model of "Democratic Centralism" dictated a disciplined chain of command from the Comintern in Moscow down through national parties to regional branches and neighborhood cadre. This model allowed the international communist movement to act in unison across vast geographic expanses, but it also often meant that internecine squabbles among party elite in Moscow had a greater impact on policy than local conditions.

The "social fascist" line was one such example. Many national leaders adopted it grudgingly and abandoned it eagerly with the Comintern shift to the Popular Front policy in 1935. Rank-and-file communists and socialists generally did not hate each other nearly as much as their leaders did. In fact, early unity initiatives between socialists and communists in France and Austria, for example, developed from below.[365] These examples demonstrate some of the drawbacks of hierarchical organization.

4. FASCISM STEALS FROM LEFT IDEOLOGY, STRATEGY, IMAGERY, AND CULTURE.

Fascism and Nazism developed out of the desire to free nationalism, militarism, and masculinity from the "decadent" capitalist bourgeoisie at the heads of the Italian and German governments, and to capture collectivist popular politics from the "degenerate" socialist left. Even before Hitler took over, the German Workers' Party used a healthy dose of red on their flags and posters, and members called each other "comrade."[366] This produced anti-ideological, antirational paradoxes like "national syndicalism" and "national socialism." "Left" Fascists and Nazis were purged as their parties gained power and cozied up to the economic elite, but the nationalist co-optation of the rhetoric of working-class populism played a key role in getting them there.

The Nazis created their own labor exchanges to provide jobs to the unemployed based on their good relations with businessmen. In some ways, this was a class-collaborationist variation on the role of the union as a gateway toward employment in an industry. Nazi Storm Trooper taverns clearly grew out of the tradition of socialist taverns dating back to the nineteenth century.

The Nazis also provided free food and shelter for supporters amid the Great Depression. This was a marked departure from traditional conservatives who showed disdain for the poor and unemployed and at most contributed occasionally to apolitical or religious charities.

This model of far-right political charity has been adopted by the Greek Golden Dawn, the Italian CasaPound, the Hogar Social Madrid, and the British National Action, all of whom have started giving out free food and groceries to ethnic Greeks, Italians, Spaniards, and "whites" only. CasaPound activists started imitating autonomous squatters by occupying abandoned buildings, and Hogar Social Madrid not only started squatting but even on occasion organizing against the eviction of ethnic Spaniards in a clear attempt to capitalize on Spain's vibrant left-wing housing-rights movement.

More broadly, postwar fascists continued to turn to the revolutionary Left for strategic insights. The “Third Position” fascists sought to apply Maoist theories of third-world revolution, to the goal of “European liberation,” which would entail forcibly removing “non-Europeans.” In the 1980s, a faction of French Troisième Voie (Third Way) sought to use “a ‘Trotskyist’ strategy” to burrow into the Front National in order to take it over from within. Ukrainian fascists have sought to appropriate the legacy of the Ukrainian anarchist leader Nestor Makhno, while the Spanish fascist Bases Autónomas lauded the anarchist Buenaventura Durruti.[367]

Starting in the late 1980s and early ’90s, though gaining force in the late 2000s, fascists across Europe have even started to copy the black bloc tactic of the German *Autonomen*. These black-clad “Autonomous Nationalists,” who sometimes use the anti-fascist flags logo with national socialist slogans or wear Palestinian kaffiyehs, have attempted to mimic the appeal of the radical Left by championing anticapitalism, anti-militarism, and anti-Zionism in Germany, Greece, the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, England, Romania, Sweden, Bulgaria, and the Netherlands. This tendency started to decline in Western Europe around 2013. “National-Anarchism” is another new variation on this theme. “National-Anarchists” abuse the anarchist concept of autonomy to argue for separate, homogenous “ethnic enclaves,” including a whites-only homeland.[368]

Many more examples could be cited, but these are sufficient to demonstrate how anti-fascism is not only about venturing outward to oppose fascism but also about guarding *Against the Fascist Creep*, as the title of Alexander Reid Ross’s marvelous work suggests. They also demonstrate the importance of left ideology. Without establishing how they fit together, concepts like “autonomy,” “national liberation,” or even “socialism,” and tactics like squatting, organizing food drives, or forming black blocs, can be co-opted under our noses.

5. IT DOESN'T TAKE THAT MANY FASCISTS TO MAKE FASCISM.

In 1919 Mussolini's *fasci* had a hundred members. When Mussolini was appointed prime minister in 1922 only about 7 to 8 percent of the Italian population, and only thirty-five of the more than five hundred members of parliament, belonged to his PNF (Partito Nazionale Fascista). The German Workers' Party only had fifty-four members when Hitler attended his first meeting after the First World War. When Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933, only about 1.3 percent of the population belonged to the NSDAP (the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or National Socialist German Workers' Party).[369] Across Europe, massive fascist parties emerged out of what were initially small nuclei during the interwar period. More recently, the electoral success of many previously miniscule fascist(ic) parties after the financial crisis of 2008, and the recent wave of migration, has demonstrated the potential for rapid far-right growth when circumstances become favorable.

Certainly these parties grew, and these regimes consolidated their power, by winning the support of conservative elites, anxious industrialists, alienated small-business owners, unemployed nationalists, and others. Triumphant postwar resistance narratives may have denied that any but the most committed fascist ideologues supported figures like Mussolini or Hitler, but in fact both regimes managed to cultivate broad popular support, thereby blurring our understanding of what it meant to be a Fascist or a Nazi in the 1930s. In that sense, it took quite a few fascists to make fascism. The point being made here, however, is that before they achieved such popular support, Fascists and Nazis were but tiny groups of ideologues.

But meanwhile, it's important to note that, as Mussolini assembled a rag-tag group of a hundred bitter veterans and quirky nationalistic socialists, and Hitler fought for leadership of the tiny German Workers' Party, Italy and Germany were seemingly on the verge of social revolution. There was no reason for the Left to have batted an eye at either development. These tiny groups could not have been more irrelevant.

Given what anarchists, communists, and socialists knew at the time, there is no reason for them to have devoted any time or attention to the early days of fascism. Yet, one cannot help but wonder what might have happened if they had. This is an impossible counterfactual to address seriously, and dwelling on it excessively omits the larger societal factors that set the stage for the rise of fascism. Nevertheless, anti-fascists have concluded that since the future is unwritten, and fascism often emerges out of small, marginal groups, every fascist or white-supremacist group should be treated as if they could be Mussolini's one hundred *fasci*, or the fifty-four members of the German Workers' Party that provided Hitler's first stepping stone.

The tragic irony of modern anti-fascism is that the more successful it is, the more its raison d'être is called into question. Its greatest successes lie in hypothetical limbo: How many murderous fascist movements have been nipped in the bud over the past seventy years by antifa groups before their violence could metastasize? We will never know—and that's a very good thing indeed.

FIVE

“SO MUCH FOR THE TOLERANT LEFT!”: “NO PLATFORM” AND FREE SPEECH

The “sacred” tradition of free speech was under attack. The birthplace of the Free Speech Movement of the 1960s—the campus of the University of California at Berkeley—was paradoxically said to be spawning a “No Free Speech Movement” a half century later. The embattled Berkeley College Republicans were under siege as first Milo Yiannopoulos, and then Ann Coulter, were prohibited from expressing their “opinions” by “f—ing babies,” as Bill Maher described them, who were carrying out what he called “the liberals’ version of book burning.” A horrifying alliance of “masked hoodlums who arrived from off-campus,” “petulant student[s],” and weak-kneed administrators, as various pundits described them, had turned universities into “propaganda training grounds for the next generation of Brown Shirts.” In another clear Nazi reference, a CNN commentator warned, “if you don’t stand up for Coulter’s liberty today, someone will come for yours tomorrow. And, more importantly, the Enlightenment will die a violent and pathetic death.”[370]

The clashes of early 2017 brought the “masked self-styled anarchists bent on wreaking havoc” known as antifa into the public spotlight.[371] Despite a complete lack of historical or theoretical knowledge, pundits concluded that anti-fascism is a greater threat to free speech than even fascism itself.

But are anti-fascists enemies of free speech? This chapter is a guide to answering this and other controversial questions pertaining to free speech and anti-fascism in the era of Donald Trump. Ultimately, I argue that although the ideology of antiauthoritarian anti-fascists promotes free speech far more than that of their critics, even their liberal critics, militant antifascism refuses to engage in terms of debate that developed out of the precepts of classical liberalism that undergird both “liberal” and “conservative” positions in the United States. Instead of privileging allegedly “neutral” universal rights, anti-fascists prioritize the political project of destroying fascism and protecting the vulnerable regardless of whether their actions are considered violations of the free speech of fascists or not.

HOW FREE IS “FREE SPEECH”?

The terms of the debate often presume that anti-fascism is the only threat to an otherwise pristine state of free speech safeguarded by the American government. It is imperative, however, to understand that the American government already seriously limits what can be expressed and who can express it. Rightly or wrongly, the government has placed a number of constraints on speech. It restricts false advertisement, libel, and television commercials for tobacco. It prosecutes incitement to violence, protects copyrights, and it limits when and where pornographic images can be shown.

Especially in times of crisis, Americans actually sympathize with restrictions of speech. This was evident in the aftermath of September 11, when half the country favored “press restraint” on covering the Abu Ghraib torture. Or in the fact that journalists are often arrested or harassed by police at protests, such as Occupy Wall Street and #NoDAPL, or that Trump’s White House restricts access to oppositional reporters. This is why the United States only ranked #43 on the World Press Freedom rankings in 2017.[372] Readers will draw their own conclusions about the wisdom of these various restrictions, but regardless, they show that free speech absolutism, like many kinds of rights absolutism, is impossible in a society of overlapping interests.

Such conflicts of interest have materialized most clearly in the American state’s suppression of the free speech of left-wing social movements when they have grown strong enough to pose a threat. Recently, for example, Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter protests have been brutally suppressed. Historically, hundreds of foreign-born radicals were deported and antiwar agitators were imprisoned and assaulted by police during the Red Scare of 1917 to 1921. Later McCarthyism blacklisted communists and other radicals. In the 1960s and ’70s, J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI used illegal covert methods to violently shut down social movements in what was known as COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program). The corpses of murdered Black Panthers show how the government takes only a

somewhat neutral stance toward free speech when it does not feel endangered itself.

Moreover, if we take free speech not merely in terms of its legal status as "enshrined" in the First Amendment but as a broader human value, we must recognize the complete rightlessness of the Guantanamo detainees, the de jure restrictions on the free speech of the country's millions of prisoners, and the restricted voting rights of many formerly incarcerated. All this and not to mention the de facto restrictions on the speech of the country's millions of undocumented immigrants, most of whom are too fearful of deportation to express themselves, and the degree to which colossal disasters, like the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, have infringed upon the right to free speech and all the other rights of those who were killed. (American alliances with dictators and support for military coups in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Greece, Indonesia, Zaire, and elsewhere also demonstrate how promoting the value of free speech is far down on the government's list of priorities.)

The First Amendment is intended to protect non-incarcerated citizens from the government, then, but not from the private sector. Free speech rights, such as the right to protest, are seriously curtailed in privately owned "public places" like shopping malls or Zuccotti Park during Occupy Wall Street. Likewise, homeowners' associations that manage condominiums have far more leeway to restrict the speech of their residents than the government.[373] Corporate employees, like government officials, are often subject to nondisclosure clauses in their contracts that prohibit them from sharing privileged information even when it is clearly in the public interest. In the information era, the power of tech companies to control the range and content of speech has been enhanced. As the historian Timothy Garton Ash points out, "What Facebook does has a wider impact than anything France does, and Google than Germany."[374] Yet, the impact of tech companies on speech is really just the latest manifestation of the larger relationship between rights to speech and the underlying economic system.

Free speech is often likened to a marketplace of ideas. Embedded in that metaphor is the American liberal notion that the key to combating "extremism" is to trust in the allegedly meritocratic essence of the public sphere: If all are allowed their say, then the good ideas will float to the top

while the bad sink to the bottom, like live-action Reddit. “Extremism” (a seemingly innocuous term that centrists use to conflate Nazis with anarchists, Jihadists with communists) arises when this “natural” process of discursive exchange is impeded. The conclusion is that the one who disrupts a fascist speaker brings us closer to “fascism” than the aggrieved orator who is actually advocating for fascism. This “marketplace” metaphor was popularized in the United States in the early twentieth century by the Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who argued that truth could best be promoted by a “free trade in ideas.”[375] Legal scholar C. Edwin Baker noted that “the marketplace of ideas theory consistently dominates the Supreme Court’s discussions of freedom of speech.”[376]

In fact, the “marketplace” metaphor perfectly describes the power dynamics of free speech in a capitalist society, though not in the way that its proponents intended. Multinational corporations aspiring toward monopolistic control of capital and information establish the general confines in which the vast majority of humanity sell their labor and articulate their speech. The market of commodities is inseparable from the market of ideas, since ideas are commodified along with everything else in capitalist society. All non-incarcerated citizens may have an equal right to literally speak, but the ability to make that speech heard and make it matter is highly stratified. Support for campaign finance reform and opposition to the Citizens United ruling by the Supreme Court show how many American liberals agree about the conflicts between free speech and big money.

Certainly, the counterargument is that “free” does not necessarily mean “equal” in either the market of ideas or of commodities. But this is where the question of meritocracy comes into the picture. The market concept is lauded for its ability to promote beneficial outcomes. When applied to the question of fascism we must ask: Can we trust that the “marketplace” of ideas will not elevate fascism to the forefront of the public sphere? Such trust sustains the perspective of liberals who agree with John Milton when he argued that society should “let [truth] and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?”[377] Unfortunately, though, “Truth” did not fare so well in interwar Europe. In fact, the horrors of the era were so catastrophic that for many they

definitively crushed the very modernist assumption of the steady upward progress of “Truth” that undergirded Milton’s optimistic assumptions.

In fact, historically, fascist and fascistic ideas have thrived in open debate. Sometimes public discourse has been sufficient to squash fascism. But sometimes it hasn’t been—which is why anti-fascists refuse to pin their hopes for the freedom and security of humanity on processes of public discourse that have already shown themselves to be fallible.

ARE ANTI-FASCISTS ANTI-FREE SPEECH?

If capital and the state indeed render speech far less free than pundits generally presume, it's fair to compare the existing speech regime to that which most antifa advocate.

Anti-fascism is pan-revolutionary left politics applied to fighting the Far Right. Therefore, a number of socialist traditions coexist under this umbrella. Since the establishment of ARA and its growth in the nineties, most American antifa have been anarchists or antiauthoritarian communists. Certainly, some have been Stalinists and other kinds of authoritarians who have supported the efforts of the Soviet Union and similar regimes to very narrowly delineate the range of acceptable speech. From that standpoint, "free speech" as such is merely a bourgeois fantasy unworthy of consideration. Since I strongly disagree with the authoritarian position, which is only held by a minority of today's anti-fascists in the United States, I will not make any effort to defend it. Instead I will observe that the antiauthoritarian position held by the majority of antifa is actually *far more pro–free speech* than that put forward by liberals.

The false assumption that the United States maximizes free speech rests on the unstated fact that this right only applies to non-incarcerated citizens. Therefore, millions of people in the United States are deprived of elements of this freedom. In contrast, antiauthoritarians seek to abolish prisons, states, and the very notion of citizenship—thereby eliminating this black hole of rightlessness. They also aim to construct a classless, post-capitalist society that would eradicate significant discrepancies in our ability to make our speech meaningful, and in the amount of time that we have to do so. By not devoting resources to prisons, police, and the military, such a post-capitalist society would be able to put far more into supporting education, the arts, and collective expression and inquiry. While the creation of a classless society would eliminate the majority of crime stemming from capitalist antagonisms, antifa argue that methods of restorative justice should replace police and prisons in addressing conflicts that persist. Rather than collaborating with oppressive regimes around the world,

antiauthoritarians aspire to destroy them by organizing in solidarity with those who are actively resisting from below.

The antiauthoritarian principle of individual and collective autonomy promotes a vision of human diversity and plurality at odds with the stifling homogeneity of capitalist consumer culture. If fascists were to start organizing in such a society, antiauthoritarian anti-fascists would still organize to shut them down, but they would not construct massive prisons to lock them up as the American government has done to countless political prisoners over the generations.

Many will argue that this is simply impossible. Even if that were true, however, what is at issue here are the values being espoused, not their likelihood of being enacted. Pundits attack antifa for being anti–free speech. Yet, even if you agree that shutting down fascist organizing constitutes an infringement upon the free speech of fascists, it is still patently obvious that anti-fascists advocate for far more free speech in society than liberals, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

DO ANTI-FASCISTS AGREE THAT "NO PLATFORMING" FASCISTS, THAT IS, DISRUPTING THEIR PUBLIC ORGANIZING, VIOLATES THEIR FREEDOM OF SPEECH?

Some do and some don't, though most don't even publicly engage with the argument. When I asked the Dutch anti-fascist Job Polak, he shrugged and smirked saying it was a "non-argument that we never felt we should engage with…you have the right to speak but you also have the right to be shut up!"[378]

Much of the antifa reluctance to engage with this issue stems from their rejection of the classically liberal terms of debate that limit political questions about personal and group expression to the confines of legalistic rights-based discourse. For liberals, the prime question is the status of the free speech rights of fascists. For revolutionary socialist antifa, the prime question is the political struggle against fascism; from their perspective, the rights promoted by capitalist parliamentary government are not inherently worthy of respect.

There are antifa groups, however, that make an effort to publicly address the argument that anti-fascism infringes upon the free speech of fascists. Rose City Antifa, for example, points out that the right to free speech derived from the Constitution "protect[s] citizens from state interference, not from criticism by the public…we do not have a powerful state apparatus at our disposal…therefore the concepts of 'censorship' and 'free speech rights' are not in any reasonable way applicable."[379]

Another popular argument that RCA and other groups make is that anti-fascism targets fascist *organizing* not fascist *speech*. In a similar vein, Leeds AFA cofounder Paul Bowman argued that "no platforming" is more of an infringement on fascist "freedom of assembly" than speech per se. ARA cofounder and Twin Cities GDC organizer Kieran explained that he would take a very different approach toward a far-right coworker if he were espousing his views as an individual than he would if he were attempting to

organize. Niccolò from Milan made a similar point when he said, “If fascists want to stay in their clubs shouting and drinking beer like pigs, let them do it, but don’t let them come out.”

For Niccolò, however, the issue is less about speech versus organizing than public versus private, since he also explained that, “For us anti-fascists, fascists should never be allowed to speak in public. Never.”[380]

Other anti-fascists argue that “no platforming” does infringe upon the free speech of fascists, but is justified by virtue of their being…*fascists*. An anti-fascist named Gato, who was active in a Midwest ARA group in the nineties, simply argued “no free speech for fascists.” Rasmus Preston from Denmark agreed, saying that “the whole argument is a liberal construction, but I think it is against the freedom of speech of fascist groups.”[381]

In 1984, *Tomahawk*, the SCALP bulletin, published an essay titled “No freedom of expression for the fascist Le Pen.”[382] Indiana Antifa argues that “speech that hurts others is never protected speech.”[383] In its 2006 “No Platform for Fascists” statement, the Irish Workers Solidarity Movement agreed with the distinction between organizing and individual expression, but argued that “as anarchists, we believe that there should be a right to free speech…[this right], however [is] not inalienable and there are very limited occasions on which [it] should be curbed.” Malamas Sotiriou from Thessaloniki argued that the 2013 murder of Pavlos Fyssas made Greek society much more sympathetic to the notion of suppressing Golden Dawn propaganda. In early 2017, some Greek mayors even refused to welcome Golden Dawn MPs to their town or allow them to give public speeches. Militant anti-fascists oppose harnessing state power to suppress fascism because of their anti-state politics and their belief that any such measures would more often be turned against the Left. Yet, Sotiriou explained how the actions of these mayors demonstrated that the “antifascist movement has succeeded in passing this idea that there is no free speech for the neo-Nazis.” When I asked Yiorgos, one of the organizers of the Athenian anti-fascist motorcycle patrols, about the idea of free speech for fascists, he just laughed and said that the notion of “no free speech for fascists is very clear here in Greece…this kind of debate is very American.” Another Greek antifa named Eliana Kanaveli smiled, calmly explaining that anti-fascism

can be summed up by the popular Greek expression: “if a hand hurts we chop it off, we don’t discuss it.”[384]

The perspectives that anti-fascists hold, or at least how they articulate them, vary by national context. Since most of the countries of continental Europe have laws against inciting racial hatred or Holocaust denial, impeding fascist propaganda is less controversial. The historical legacy of fascism and Nazism were far more palpable for people who had grown up under such regimes or had parents and relatives who had. Moreover, European left political culture is more inclined to conceive of the struggle against fascism in politically oppositional terms as opposed to a test-case for individual civil liberties.

Personally, I find the argument that shutting down fascist organizing does not infringe upon the speech of fascists to be unconvincing. While it is essential to distinguish between the hateful comments of isolated individuals and the organizing initiatives of fascists, organizing constitutes speech—often literally. Not all speech is organizing, and therefore anti-fascists do not organize against speech per se, but much organizing is speech. If the tables were turned this would be obvious. If a fascist movement grew so powerful that it prevented leftists from gathering in public, and so threatening that collectively expressing anticapitalist aspirations carried the threat of physical confrontation, we would *rightly* conclude that our speech was being curtailed.

While it is true that the First Amendment focuses on protecting citizens from the government, when people argue that knocking over the podium of a fascist speaker violates her freedom of speech, “free speech” is usually understood as an ethical value, not simply a constitutional protection. Classical liberalism posits freedom of speech as a central tenet of its allegedly “neutral” ideology. Therefore, the debate revolves around the legitimacy of the “universal” principle that society should not limit speech on political grounds. When understood as a value rather than a law, it is clear that anti-fascism opposes this principle in its absolutist form (i.e., that all abridgements of speech are wrong). Instead, many anti-fascists make the illiberal argument: “no free speech for fascists.” From their perspective, the safety and well-being of marginalized populations is the priority. As Joe from the Raleigh-Durham GDC argued, “the idea that freedom of speech is

the most important thing that we can protect can only be held by someone who thinks that life is analogous to a debate hall."[385] In my opinion "no platforming" fascists often infringes upon their speech, but this infringement is justified for its role in the political struggle against fascism.

Regardless of how they articulate themselves, these antifascists value the free and open exchange of ideas—they simply draw the line at those who use that freedom to promote genocide or question people's humanity.

It's important to note, however, that the vast majority of people who oppose limiting speech on political grounds are not free speech absolutists. They all have their exceptions to the rule, whether obscenity, incitement to violence, copyright infringement, press censorship during wartime, or restrictions for the incarcerated. If we rephrase the terms of the debate by taking these exceptions into account, we can see that many liberals support limiting the speech of working-class teens busted for drugs, but not limiting the speech of Nazis. Many are fine when the police quash the free speech of the undocumented by hunting them down, while they amplify the speech of the Klan by protecting them. They advocate curtailing ads for cigarettes but not ads for white supremacy.

All of these examples limit speech. The only difference is that liberals pretend that their limitations are apolitical, while anti-fascists embrace an avowedly political rejection of fascism. Anti-fascists reject the notion that politics can be reduced to the "neutral" management of disparate, atomized interests. They break through the liberal desire to confine the question to the realm of individual rights by foregrounding the ongoing collective struggle against fascism. When they say "never again," they mean it, and they're willing to use any means necessary to make sure.

In reality, liberal criteria for limiting speech are heavily steeped in the pervasive logic of capital, militarism, nationalism, colonialism, and the institutional racism of the criminal "justice" system, as well as the immigration system. Every time one or more of these factors limits the ability of human beings to express themselves it is political. If one must be an absolutist to be considered "pro-free speech," then 99.9 percent of Americans and the government that claims to represent them are anti–free speech.

Rather than reducing a complex discussion to a Manichean distinction between allegedly “pro” and “anti” factions, it makes far more sense to compare competing criteria for limiting speech in the public interest. It is highly disingenuous and inaccurate to argue that anti-fascists are “anti–free speech” when no one actually lives up to the absolutist standard by which they are judged, and the society that antiauthoritarians aim to create would provide far more opportunity for far more people to freely express themselves than the status quo that their liberal critics defend.

WHAT ABOUT THE "SLIPPERY SLOPE"?

The "slippery slope" argument is commonly used against restricting speech on political grounds in general, and against anti-fascism in particular. As Kevin Drum wrote in *Mother Jones*:

> …Whenever you start thinking these are good reasons to overturn—by violence or otherwise—someone's invitation to speak, ask yourself this: *Who decides?* Because once you concede the right to keep people from speaking, you concede the right of somebody to make that decision. And that somebody may eventually decide to shut down communists. Or anti-war protesters. Or gays. Or sociobiologists. Or Jews who defend Israel. Or Muslims. I don't want anyone to have that power. No one else on the left should want it either.[386]

So the question is: Where do you draw the line? The argument rests on the assumption that there is no nonarbitrary line to be drawn—once one starts down this path, the slope is so slippery that it inevitably slides into "totalitarianism." Therefore, the argument goes, better not to start down it at all.

At first glance, this argument seems especially convincing when it comes to fascism. If scholars and activists struggle to define a phenomenon that often branches out to garner the support of conservatives and to infiltrate leftist circles, then how is it possible to pinpoint the phenomenon with sufficient clarity to suppress it without endangering non-fascist discourse? This point is not entirely without merit, but despite some divergence in interpretation, anti-fascists generally agree on the broad strokes of fascism such as patriarchy, white supremacy, authoritarianism, and so on. In practice, your average anti-fascists risking their physical well-being and personal liberty to confront Nazis are almost always much more well-versed in the nuanced distinctions between the various strains of fascism and their center-right counterparts than most self-righteous pundits.

Furthermore, since militant antifascism usually develops out of defensive rather than offensive considerations, fascists usually establish a nonarbitrary line of political demarcation for the anti-fascists with their knives and fists. “No platforming” fascists only runs the risk of devolving into “no platforming” “gays” if you entirely divorce a tactic from its politics—a specialty of liberal commentators.

But “*Who decides?*” Kevin Drum asks in his *Mother Jones* article, and it’s a fair question. This can seem a vexing question when assessed in an abstract analytical fashion divorced from context and politics. When addressed in a historical context, however, the contours of the debate are clearer. Efforts to deny a platform to fascists did not emerge from random individuals suddenly deciding that they “disagreed” with fascists and therefore wanted to silence them. Rather, they grew out of the historic struggle, often waged in self-defense, of movements of leftists—Jews, people of color, Muslims, queer and trans people, and others, to make sure that fascists do not grow powerful enough to murder them. This is the product of generations of transnational struggle, not a thought experiment.

More fundamentally, however, this question revolves around the source of political legitimacy. Militant anti-fascism challenges the state monopoly on political legitimacy by making a political case for popular sovereignty from below. In so doing, it does not shy away from asserting the righteousness of anti-fascist politics. Rather than buying into the liberal notion that all political “opinions” are equal, anti-fascists unabashedly attack the legitimacy of fascism and institutions that support it. From an anti-fascist perspective, the question is not about establishing a neutral line beyond which right-wing politics cannot cross, but about entirely transforming society by tearing down oppression in all its forms. For revolutionary socialist anti-fascists, the question to ask is, “Who will win the political struggle?”

The fact that the specific circumstances of anti-fascist organizing never enter into the considerations of “free speech” critics demonstrates how they address the matter on exclusively analytical grounds. If, according to their analytical philosophizing, suppressing white-supremacist organizing inevitably slides into suppressing “everyone you disagree with,” or “sociobiologists,” as Drum suggests, then it stands to reason this must have

happened quite frequently over the past century of anti-fascist militancy. But liberal pundits don't even consider making such an empirical inquiry because they know so little about what they are talking about. They address the notion of "no platform for fascists" as if it were a new proposition that crazy radicals spontaneously decided to try out without any track record.

If we take a look at the track record of anti-fascism, however, a consistent pattern emerges that is so familiar to anti-fascists that it's annoying: When local fascist organizing declines, so does local anti-fascist organizing. When the 43 Group had sufficiently pummeled Mosley's fascist Union Movement into oblivion they didn't turn their sights on conservatives, they disbanded. Writing in 2003, ARA organizer Rory McGowan wrote, "where there is no visible or active Nazi presence, ARA groups fall into a state of inactivity."[387] When SCALP Besançon succeeded in shutting down white-power shows being organized by the Blood and Honour satellite groups, Radical Korps and the Lyon Bunker Korps and the local Nazi movement dissolved as it turned in on itself; they didn't just turn to the next most conservative political group, they dissolved. After Norwegian fascism was largely stamped out in the late nineties, the country's antifa have spent most of their time monitoring Swedish fascists with their Scandinavian comrades rather than moving on to the next most right-wing political faction.

The fact that the lifespans of most antifa groups are determined by the activities of their fascist enemies is so well-known that it actually constitutes a common critique of how antifa organize. Many organizers lament the difficulty of maintaining membership when local fascist organizing is minimal. If anti-fascism is just about silencing those holding "alternative points of view" then over the past hundred years some tangible examples of antifa groups sliding down this allegedly slippery slope should have been seen. Instead, the historical record points in the opposite direction. In addition, although I agree with militant anti-fascists that state bans of Nazis are not the way to go, European countries that have outlawed racial hatred, Nazism, and Holocaust denial, as fraught and hypocritical as these restrictions are, have not suddenly spiraled into dystopian authoritarianism as a result. The American presumption that political limits on speech are entirely untenable is not borne out by the evidence.

The liberal alternative to militant anti-fascism is to have faith in the power of rational discourse, the police, and the institutions of government to prevent the ascension of a fascist regime. As we have established, this formula has failed on several notable occasions. Given the documented shortcomings of “liberal anti-fascism” and the failure of the allied strategy of appeasement leading up to World War II, a more convincing argument can be made that allowing fascism to develop and expand runs the documented risk of sliding into “totalitarianism.” If we don’t stop them when they are small, do we stop them when they are medium-sized? If not when they are medium-sized, then when they are large? When they’re in government? Do we need to wait until the swastikas are unfurled from government buildings before we defend ourselves?

Banner at Madrid anti-fascist march against Hogar Social in May 2017. [PHOTO BY AUTHOR]

Let’s also take a step back to acknowledge that the worst-case scenario that liberal critics fear entails the complete elimination of fascism and explicitly white-supremacist organizing. How did that prospect become

more horrifying than allowing such groups to flourish? A recent psychological study from the University of Kansas concluded that "explicit racial prejudice is a reliable predictor of the 'free speech defense' of racist expression…It's racists defending racists."[388] This conclusion does not inherently invalidate the liberal argument, but it should encourage us to think beyond the mere principles under consideration to realize a very common underlying motive of racism.

Finally, it's worth adding that militant anti-fascism is but one facet of a larger revolutionary project. Many antifa groups organize not only against fascism, but aim to combat all forms of oppression such as homophobia, capitalism, patriarchy, and so on. In that way, they see fascism as only the most acute version of larger systemic threats. When I spoke with members of Pavé Brûlant in Bordeaux, they continually stressed that all major political parties in France manifested fascistic traits. They argued that the *Front National* serves to distract society from the fascistic qualities of other political parties. Therefore, although they focus on far-right groups, Pavé Brûlant is one of many antifa groups that aims to combat fascistic politics wherever they emerge, as part of a holistic strategy.[389]

This does not mean that antifa groups necessarily intend to apply the exact same tactics to larger and larger segments of the political landscape but that anti-fascists are, simply, revolutionaries. It's surreal to watch liberal pundits lambast anti-fascists for disrupting a fascist speech, when their revolutionary socialist ideology advocates the global expropriation of the capitalist ruling class and the destruction (or capture) of all existing states by means of an international popular uprising that most believe will necessitate violent confrontation with state forces.

If they are critical of "no platform," wait 'til they hear about class war.

MUSTN'T "TRUTH" BE CONFRONTED BY "ERROR"?

One objection to the "no platforming" of fascists or restricting their speech in general comes from the British philosopher John Stuart Mill's influential *On Liberty*. In this impassioned defense of free speech, Mill argues that even when the suppressed opinion is entirely false, "unless it is suffered to be, and actually is, vigorously and earnestly contested, it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice…" According to Mill, "The clearer perception and livelier impression of truth [is] produced by its collision with error."

This would suggest, though, presenting pro- and antislavery perspectives, for example, as equally legitimate moral positions for society to consider; this, instead of teaching the Holocaust, slavery, or the genocide of indigenous populations through primary sources from slaveholders, Nazis, or colonists in a larger antiracist, anticolonial context—a way in which the antiracist perspective would be enriched and deepened without re-inscribing the violence of genocide and white supremacy through a "vigorous and earnest" contestation of the humanity of indigenous, black, or Jewish people.

Moreover, despite the rationalistic aspirations that drove Mill and his colleagues of the era, as Mills himself put it, the majority of what most people believe is always "held in the manner of a prejudice." Few really examine the philosophical, political, and sociological underpinnings of their most deeply felt values, and even most who do are far less self-reflexive than they imagine. Societal norms are not changed through a rational process of analysis; they gradually transform through the ongoing struggle of competing interests, which are perpetually shaped by shifting economic and social factors. Though they certainly vary in how they interpret it, the widespread recognition on the part of most people that "racism is wrong" developed out of generations of struggle by people of color. Today this notion pervades society, along with the historical agreement that slavery and the Holocaust were grave atrocities. Ideally, everyone would devote a

significant amount of time and mental energy toward internalizing why these tragedies occurred and how they reflect upon history. But since most people won’t engage in such reflection, the success of social movements in establishing baselines of antiracist sentiment in the passive “prejudice[s]” of society represents an important bulwark against the attempts of the alt-right to shift the center of gravity toward passive prejudices of white supremacy. “Passive” anti-racism is preferable to active white supremacy.

DOESN'T "NO PLATFORMING" FASCISTS ERODE FREE SPEECH IN A WAY THAT HURTS THE LEFT MORE THAN THE RIGHT?

If taken in a legalistic direction toward promoting bans of government-disapproved speech then it certainly does. For example, the British Public Order act was used against the National Front, but also against the miners' strike of 1984–1985.[390] European countries such as Germany have laws against Nazism and Holocaust denial, but they also often restrict revolutionary language on the left—which is why German anti-fascists consider state power to be an enemy, not an ally. That is why German antifa seek to shut down fascist organizing through direct action rather than appealing to the state.

In any event, regardless of what the Left argues, the historical record is pretty clear that the state will invent an excuse when it needs one. When the radical Left threatens elite interests, repression has and will come—plain and simple. One might argue that militant anti-fascism erodes public support for free speech, which would therefore reduce public support for the Left when persecution arises. But the antifascist argument is not primarily about the strategy of "no platforming"; it is fundamentally about understanding fascism as a political enemy with which we cannot coexist.

Even that political argument is really only a stepping stone toward promoting revolutionary socialist consciousness more broadly. If anti-fascism is working, then the Left is growing larger and more powerful, which is the key to resisting repression.

SHUTTING DOWN NAZIS MAKES YOU NO BETTER THAN A NAZI!

Since Nazis and other fascists are known historically for shutting down the events of their leftist opponents, some argue that anyone who shuts down a political event, even if that event is a Nazi event, is therefore a Nazi. Fascists are also known for being nationalists, starting wars, and building prisons, so does that mean anarchists can accuse liberals who share those qualities of also being fascists? Clearly you can't define an ideology based only on a sole attribute. Despite the fact that liberals endorse infringing upon free speech far more than most anti-fascists, they imagine themselves as guardians of free speech, and therefore attack the illiberal politics of anti-fascism by folding it into the illiberal politics of fascism.

If your main objection to Nazism is its suppression of the meetings of the opposition, then that says more about your politics than about those you are critiquing. Anti-fascists don't oppose fascism because it is illiberal in the abstract, but because it promotes white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, ultra-nationalism, authoritarianism, and genocide.

WHAT ABOUT ANTI-FASCIST PRINCIPLES IN THE UNIVERSITY?

Since the 1960s, waves of popular social movements, from the civil rights movement to the gay and lesbian movement to the more recent mobilizing for transgender rights, have pushed universities to become more inclusive and "diverse." Although most American liberals infuse the notion of "diversity" with antiracist and antisexist political content, when the term diversity is understood as an apolitical abstraction it can be taken in reactionary directions. For example, in *Time* magazine, the director of the conservative Young Americans for Liberty lauded the advance of racial and gender "diversity" in higher education—because, he argued, "diversity of thought" understood as laissez faire speech is an analogous social good… even if that speech is intended to roll back racial and gender "diversity."[391] He uses the apolitical abstraction to undermine the political content that progressives have attempted to invest in the term.

It only emphasizes the point: Despite mainstream portrayals of campus social justice victories as apolitical updates to our collective morality, each generation that has pushed administrations to establish ethnic studies departments, to form women's and gender studies departments, to hire more faculty of color has known that these struggles and the values they promote are entirely political. These advances do not represent a more perfect "neutrality" but rather the adoption of certain basic feminist and antiracist principles. As universities were increasingly forced to care about diversity, their gradual adherence to the demands of the marginalized became opportunities to sell their profit-driven institutions in a new market of liberal pluralism.

But institutional commitments to providing resources and support for LGBTQ students, or the establishment of African cultural houses, or the creation of scholarships for undocumented students, are entirely hollow if the very same institutions also provide space for individuals and groups that not only deny the humanity of those populations, but are actively organizing movements to physically deprive them of their existence. How can a

university publicize the mental health resources it offers for trans students and then allow Milo Yiannopoulos to publicly incite hatred against a transgender student?

If universities did not claim to have any normative values there would be no contradiction. Yet, those of us who have spent years on campuses across the country know how liberal multiculturalism has been institutionalized and, perhaps more importantly, monetized. Administrators don't get to say they care about the marginalized when schmoozing with donors, while they're also supporting the right of bigots to preach about the biological inferiority of those same people. NYU vice provost Ulrich Baer rightly argues that "free-speech protections" end when they "mean that someone's humanity, or their right to participate in political speech as political agents, can be freely attacked, demeaned or questioned."[392] Attorney Noah Schabacker also points out that universities have a "legal obligation" to ban speakers like Yiannopoulos in order to conform to the mandates of Title VI and Title IX, which require schools to eliminate discrimination based on gender and race.[393]

Regardless of such legalistics, however, the "right" to call into question the humanity of others has consequences. On May 20, 2017, a white-supremacist student at the University of Maryland who belonged to an "Alt-Reich" Facebook group fatally stabbed an African American student named Richard Collins III. This murder followed an escalating series of racist propaganda and nooses around campus following Donald Trump's inauguration. Many Maryland students connected the dots between the administration's "milquetoast attitude to the racist flyers, calling hate speech 'free speech' " and Collins's murder.[394] Fighting back against white-supremacist violence on campus requires our movements to push institutions of higher education to openly and unequivocally embrace antiracism.

SIX

STRATEGY, (NON)VIOLENCE, AND EVERYDAY ANTI-FASCISM

“Hey, are you part of the White Knights?” a young Native American skinhead graffiti artist named Gator shouted across the street to a young white skinhead. Gator crossed the street alongside his sixteen-year-old sidekick, Kieran, and asked again, “Are you a White Knight?” The White Knights were a new white-power skinhead group that, not long before—in the late 1980s—had started terrorizing punks and people of color in Minneapolis. Gator and Kieran were part of a small antiracist skinhead crew called the Baldies that decided to stand up to them. Over time, members of the Baldies would create Anti-Racist Action, which would eventually expand into a national network. But well before such large ambitions could bloom, Gator was teaching Kieran a “genius” strategy for confronting young, impressionable white supremacists.

“So, are you?” Gator asked.

“Yes, I am,” the kid responded.

Taking a step closer Gator explained that the next time he saw him, the answer had better be “No.”

Thirty years later, Kieran marveled at this strategy that “gave teens a chance to think about their stance and let them know that it carried consequences…it gave them fair warning.” In fact, this strategy caused several white-power skins to switch over to the Baldies crew—an outcome that would have been far less likely had they been attacked immediately.[395] This is a story about violence where punches were not thrown, about how

making the consequences of racism known at the outset can nip white power in the bud. This is a story that shows how thoughtful many anti-fascists have been about violence and how effective carefully crafted threats of its application can be.

Despite the media portrayal of a deranged, bloodthirsty antifa, or the alt-right petition that developed after the anti–Milo Yiannopoulos protest to have "antifa" declared a terrorist organization (as if "antifa" were even an organization, let alone terrorist), the vast majority of anti-fascist tactics involve no physical violence whatsoever. Anti-fascists conduct research on the Far Right online, in person, and sometimes through infiltration; they dox them, push cultural milieux to disown them, pressure bosses to fire them, and demand that venues cancel their shows, conferences, and meetings; they organize educational events, reading groups, trainings, athletic tournaments, and fund-raisers; they write articles, leaflets, and newspapers, drop banners, and make videos; they support refugees and immigrants, defend reproductive rights, and stand up against police brutality.

But it is also true that some of them punch Nazis in the face and don't apologize for it.

In fact, more than anything, it was the anti-fascist punching of Richard Spencer on Inauguration Day 2017 that catapulted the question of antiracist violence into the national spotlight. Yet even when somewhat sympathetic, most coverage of the act and the politics surrounding it reduced anti-fascist violence to the purportedly trivial, individualistic act of "Nazi-punching." In the era of memes and GIFs, "Nazi-punching" was presented as a short-sighted fad. It was written about in a vein similar to the frenzy surrounding the 2013 "knockout game" where a small number of teens were punching random people for fun.[396] In a *Newsweek* interview, Randy Cohen, formerly *The Ethicist* columnist at *The New York Times Magazine*, epitomized the tendency to interpret anti-fascist violence as superficially as possible by arguing that the Holocaust occurred "not because people failed to punch Nazis." Instead, Cohen advocated following "Gandhi's example or King's example…without resorting to the gutter tactics of people like Spencer."[397]

In truth, violence represents a small though vital sliver of anti-fascist activity.

There are three main arguments that anti-fascists use to justify their occasional violence. First, as explained in Chapter 4, anti-fascists make a historical argument based on the accurate observation that "rational debate" and the institutions of government have failed to consistently halt the rise of fascism. Given that fact, they argue that the only hope to prevent a sequel is to physically prevent any potential fascist advance. Second, they point to the many successful examples of militant anti-fascism shutting down or severely hampering far-right organizing since the end of World War II. Third, fascist violence often necessitates self-defense—although anti-fascists challenge conventional interpretations of self-defense grounded in individualistic personal ethics by legitimating offensive tactics in order to forestall the potential need for literal self-defense down the line.

In other words, anti-fascists don't wait for a fascist threat to become violent before acting to shut it down, physically if necessary. As Murray from Baltimore ARA explained it,

> You fight them by writing letters and making phone calls so you don't have to fight them with fists. You fight them with fists so you don't have to fight them with knives. You fight them with knives so you don't have to fight them with guns. You fight them with guns so you don't have to fight them with tanks.[398]

This chapter will explore the main contours of the current debates surrounding "no platforming" and anti-fascist violence. Are liberals right that confronting fascists only makes them grow stronger? Should we just ignore them? If so many people glorify fighting Nazis in the 1930s and '40s, why do they disparage confronting them today? Does research really show that violence only plays into fascist hands? After answering these questions, I will discuss the danger of machismo, the fetishization of violence, and the role of feminism in anti-fascism. Next, I will address the relationship between militant anti-fascism, popular politics, and public opinion. Can black blocs and popular struggle coexist? Finally, I will explore the possibilities of "everyday anti-fascism" in the age of Trump.

★ ★ ★

From Tom Hanks in *Saving Private Ryan* and Brad Pitt in *Inglourious Basterds* to Indiana Jones, nothing seems to delight American moviegoers more than killing Nazis. As the epitome of historical evil, seemingly any form of punishment unleashed upon the fascist body—whether baseball bats to the head from Tarantino's "Bear Jew" or airplane propellers slicing up a German mechanic in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*—elicits a cathartic delight at the unleashing of vengeful justice at a very safe chronological and spatial distance. Since World War II is the least controversial war in American history, few dispute the legitimacy of fighting Nazis in the late 1930s and '40s.

But would those same moviegoers consider it just as heroic to fight Nazis *before* the outbreak of war, while Hitler's regime was building camps and ghettos? Or *before* Hitler even took power in 1933? How would Americans respond to a cinematic depiction of communist and social democratic organizations, such as the Red Front Fighters' League, the Iron Front for Resistance Against Fascism, and Antifaschistische Aktion when they fought the Nazi Sturmabteilung in the 1920s and '30s? I like to imagine most Americans would sympathize with these militant formations because they know that the story ultimately ends in the gas chambers.

So why then are so many Americans allergic to not only the prospect of physically confronting fascists and white supremacists, but even nonviolently disrupting their speeches in favor of a Fourth Reich?

There appear to be several reasons. First, most people have an "all-or-nothing" understanding of fascism that prevents them from taking fascists seriously until they seize power. Despite all of the hand-wringing about "Trump the fascist" from center-left commentators and enraged Clinton supporters, very few really believe that there is any serious chance of a fascistic regime ever materializing in America. Since most people tacitly conceive of fascism exclusively in terms of entirely "totalitarian" regimes, the prospect of fascism becomes an "all-or-nothing" proposition.

While this skepticism toward the imminent potential of an explicitly fascist government in the United States is justified, antifa argue that we should always remember that few took seriously the small bands of followers around Mussolini and Hitler when they started their ascent, and therefore we should remain vigilant against any and every manifestation of

fascistic politics. Lack of concern over such a possibility is reinforced by the prevalent tendency to sever past eras of history, such as the Nazi regime or the Jim Crow era, from the present. Once their contributions to contemporary politics are reduced to moralistic aphorisms, the real thrust of their historical example and the elements of continuity between eras are considered irrelevant to current social struggle.

Moreover, the probability of an actual fascist government is actually beside the point in terms of everyday organizing. Fascist violence is not an all-or-nothing proposition. Even in relatively small doses, it can be quite dangerous and therefore deserves to be taken seriously. This is painfully obvious to the victims of transphobic or anti-immigrant violence, for example.

Second, many people ascribe to a kind of "liberal antifascism," whether they know it or not. By "liberal anti-fascism" I mean a faith in the inherent power of the public sphere to filter out fascist ideas, and in the institutions of government to forestall the advancement of fascist politics. If these factors were sufficient to protect everyone from fascist violence then why would anyone bother confronting Nazis? As outlined in Chapter 4, however, anti-fascists point to the legal seizures of power by Mussolini and Hitler as examples of the fallibility of reasoned argument and parliamentary government to forestall fascism.

This is not at all to say that there is no value in political argumentation. The attraction of far-right ideology often glistens brightest when the Left fails to win the victories necessary to address popular needs and promote its own ideological perspectives. Resisting fascism requires not only anti-fascist organizing, but organizing on all fronts. Yet anti-fascist argumentation is only useful for those who might be sympathetic toward fascism—its potential popular base—rather than ideologues who have nothing but disdain for the very terms of debate.

When militant anti-fascists successfully deprive fascists or white supremacists of a platform to promote their agenda, "liberal anti-fascists" often argue that shutting them down is counterproductive because it only gives them more attention and allows them to play the victim. If they really have nothing of value to offer society, the argument goes, then that will be borne out.

Let’s examine the merit of this argument when applied to two common cases: (1) small fascist organizations attempting to recruit and, (2) far-right celebrity speakers.

The first and perhaps most important point to make is that most anti-fascist organizing is literal self-defense. Most of the antifa groups that formed in the eighties and nineties consisted of punks and anarchists who had to defend themselves from a growing white-power skinhead menace. It’s fine for commentators to pontificate about “just ignoring them,” but when they are coming at you with clubs, screwdrivers, or knives, it’s not that simple. Even if we put the anti-state politics of most antifa aside for the moment, it’s clear that self-defense is legitimate when the police are absent or sympathetic toward fascist aggressors.

What about when fascists do not pose an immediate physical threat? Is it better to ignore small “harmless” fascist groups? By now it should be clear that small fascist groups do not always remain that way. In Greece, Golden Dawn burst out of nowhere to become a major force poised to lead a government before criminal charges decimated party leadership in 2013. And they may yet bounce back; we can never be sure.

Clearly, it is incumbent upon us to do what we can to prevent such groups from growing. To do so, it’s essential to understand how they grow when they do. Leftist organizers often find this task to be much easier than liberal pundits because they are immersed in the mechanisms of movement building. They understand that to develop, movements need to hold public events, go on marches, pass out propaganda, publish newspapers, launch campaigns, form alliances and coalitions, and establish public offices, social centers, and bookstores. They must establish attractive social and cultural milieux that give new recruits a sense of belonging and a desire to commit to the struggle. For those who have spent years building this infrastructure and weathering the inevitable ebbs and flows in enthusiasm, commitment, and momentum that movement-building entails, it is obvious that the consistent inability to accomplish some or all of these political tactics would be devastating. After all, fascism has demonstrated that systematically crushing the public presence of an opposing movement can work very well.

The spectacle of shutting down fascists may give them more attention in the short-term, but such actions deprive them of the ability to capitalize on that attention. Moreover, the spectacle of shutting them down, like all media spectacles, inevitably fades as it becomes more regular. The first time anti-fascists shut down Nazis it's newsworthy, the fiftieth time not so much. Certainly, fascists always play the victim when they are shut down. Yet, they also play the victim when they are not. Fascism was built on fear—fear of Jews, communists, immigrants, Freemasons, homosexuals, "national decadence," aesthetic modernism, "white genocide," and so on. No matter how the Left treats fascists, they will always present themselves as aggrieved victims.

The vast majority of those who would be significantly swayed by fascist claims to victimhood would respond positively to such an appeal under any pretense. Anti-fascists argue that any rhetorical benefit gained from such confrontations is outweighed by their reduced ability to disseminate it.

It is true that the dynamics of "no platforming" changed significantly with the advent of the Internet. The Internet is a platform that anti-fascists cannot completely contest, though efforts to persuade Reddit and other forums to ban racist threads have borne some fruit. Yet, leftists who have worked on Internet propaganda realize that it can only go so far in sparking a mass movement without some kind of real-world corollary. That is why antifa argue that it is imperative to confront the alt-right as they attempt to step out from behind their screens to establish a public presence—something that would make their Internet propaganda all that much more potent.

Liberal pundits fail to fully grasp the importance of movement infrastructure because their opinion-manufacturing profession ascribes supreme importance to the communication of ideas in abstraction. But the conditions under which ideas are communicated matter a great deal. Organizers know that it is difficult to maintain the commitment of movement participants even when things are going well and there is little opposition. But if participation meant constant physical confrontation, technological harassment, and social ostracization, it would be exponentially more difficult to recruit. This is what my DC antifa source, Chepe, calls the " 'it's not worth it' principle." Since new fascists come

looking “to identify with the most powerful kid on the block,” Chepe explained that in his experience, “when they are defeated in conflict or find their brethren run off, they feel like ‘it’s not worth it’ and a lot of them leave.”[399]

In the course of my interviews and research, I found a litany of cases where combinations of physical confrontations, doxxing, infiltration, and other anti-fascist tactics have succeeded in shutting down or severely hampering local and national fascist organizing. While it’s important to remember that history is never mono-causal, that anti-fascists may at times inflate their role in eliminating certain far-right groups, and that there are also examples of anti-fascists failing to shut down fascist activity, the relatively small sampling I gathered of successful campaigns shows that antifa methods very often work, and work well. In the 1940s, the British 43 Group succeeded in shutting down Mosley’s Union Movement. The massive Anti-Nazi League played a huge role in derailing the National Front in the U.K. in the late seventies and early eighties. Anti-fascist punks and skins across North America and Europe recounted how they overwhelmingly pushed Nazi skins out of their scene. Literally thousands of white-power shows have been canceled. Most of those that have occurred have been carried out clandestinely. Norwegian antifa successfully abolished their fascist movement in the 1990s. ARA played an important role in sabotaging the National Front and the World Church of the Creator by the early 2000s. Annual Nazi marches in Dresden, Roskilde, and Salem were eventually shut down, causing many of the groups behind them to fracture. Street confrontations stifled Denmark’s National Front, and doxxing broke the Danish Front. AFA shut down the British National Party in Lancashire through successful repeated physical confrontations. SCALP Besançon shut down two different local groups of Bloc Identitaire, and then the spotlight they shone on the Front Comtois, its successor formation, led the authorities to ban the group. Even when Dutch anti-fascists were badly beaten back by fascists from the Nationalistische Volks Beweging (NVB) on one occasion in 2007, the police intervened and arrested the fascists on weapons charges, which caused the group to turn in on itself and subsequently collapse.[400]

Madrid antifa demo May 1, 2013. [PHOTO BY AUTHOR]

I could go on but there is no need. Similar stories can be told in towns and cities around the world.

Meanwhile, although anti-fascist "no platforming" has traditionally not been applied to individual far-right celebrity speakers, today it has become a highly publicized facet of American anti-fascism.

These famous speakers pose different challenges for organizers. By virtue of their fame, figures like Milo Yiannopoulos or Ann Coulter have a platform to express themselves to millions. Yiannopoulos's fame did indeed soar after he was shut down in Berkeley, and Coulter was more than happy to be shut down by the "free speech hating liberals" of Berkeley. For these reasons commentators concluded that "the black-clad rioters…served [Yiannopoulos's] ultimate interests" by "put[ting] him in an undeservedly sympathetic light." One writer argued in the *Telegraph* that, "Resorting to violence is particularly stupid, given that Yiannopoulos's celebrity relies on reactions which are as outlandish as his personality." Even on the left, Christian Parenti and James Davis argued that the Right "have, Judo-style, baited the campus left into bumptious overreactions" in their effort to shut

down the likes of Yiannopoulos and Charles Murray because of his racist 1994 book *The Bell Curve*.[401]

The first point to make here is that the speakers and their careers are only part of the consideration. If shutting down Yiannopoulos or Coulter prevented a single undocumented or transgender student from facing harassment or worse, as happened when Yiannopoulos spoke at UW-Milwaukee, then it was worth it. Period. Moreover, although these events revolve around individuals who do not claim to represent an organization, they often nonetheless serve as organizing and recruitment opportunities for the Far Right. When left uncontested, such events become spaces for "alienated" racists to meet each other, mingle, and take a leaflet from the local Minutemen, Traditionalist Workers Party, or other far-right group. The speaking engagements of the Holocaust denier David Irving have served that purpose for years.

In part, this is an argument about the importance of face-to-face politics. Individuals watching Yiannopoulos on YouTube do not have the same political potential as when they are physically grouped.

Although high-profile speakers enjoy the controversy around being shut down, there is clearly a diminishing marginal return on scandal. Every time Coulter and Yiannopoulos get banned or shut down the media and public will care a little less. The columns from the free speech warriors will likely eventually slow down as they run out of new points and their ability to manufacture outrage dissipates. And at a certain point, it actually benefits the Coulters et al. to speak. Making it a nightmare for campus groups and administrators to have such speakers on campus will inevitably reduce the number of invitations.

The more fundamental point that such critics overlook, however, is that no matter where in the public sphere fascists complain they've been "silenced," the actions they complain about are contributing toward the creation of a broad-based antiracist, anti-fascist movement of direct action that has no tolerance for bigotry. From an antiracist-movement-building perspective, the act of shutting down a racist speaker may be more important in the long run than its immediate effect on a given event. In April 2017, *New York Magazine* columnist Jonathan Chait lamented the "war on the liberal mind" being waged by what he calls "the 'shut it down!'

left."[402] Though intended as a pejorative characterization, "the 'shut it down!' left" is an apt term for a direct-action tendency in the radical Left that developed through Occupy and Black Lives Matter, and is increasingly capable of pushing back against the advances of white supremacy, homophobia, patriarchy, and domination in all its forms.

The far-right stars of Ann Coulter, Bill O'Reilly, and Milo Yiannopoulos will rise and fall. And as they sink into obscurity other racists and sexists will inherit their book contracts and radio shows. The question is not which fascist best cashes in on "snowflake tears," but whether we can build a movement powerful enough to crush any collective manifestations of their fascistic aspirations.

★ ★ ★

Beyond the argument for the superiority of nonviolent methods on ethical grounds, opposition to physically confronting fascists is also typically advanced by the argument that nonviolent methods are, simply, more effective. One such advocate is Gene Sharp, who is head of the Albert Einstein Institution, a nonprofit dedicated to the furtherance of "strategic nonviolence," an argumentation based purely on efficacy. In this section, I will address the arguments put forth by the International Studies scholar Erica Chenoweth, who has been perhaps the most prominent representative of this perspective in recent debates over anti-fascism.

Shortly after high-profile instances of black bloc property destruction at the 2017 presidential inauguration and the anti-Yiannopoulos protest at Berkeley, Chenoweth wrote an article for the *New Republic* that appeared under the headline "Violence will *only* hurt the Trump Resistance" (my emphasis) based on conclusions drawn from *Why Civil Resistance Works*, which she cowrote with Maria Stephan.[403] Chenoweth's research on nonviolence was also cited as evidence that "black blocs hurt nonviolent efforts" in a widely circulated *Newsweek* article on the black bloc in Berkeley.[404]

As the *Newsweek* reference and the headline of the *New Republic* article suggest, Chenoweth argues that "historical evidence" demonstrates that not only black bloc tactics but "violent flanks" in general are counterproductive. *Why Civil Resistance Works* argues that between 1900

and 2006 “non-violent resistance campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts.”[405] Yet, if she were arguing on purely empirical grounds, wouldn’t the conclusion be that “Violence will *likely* hurt the Trump Resistance”? Even her own research contradicts her absolutist rejection of violence when based only on strategic outcomes. This suggests that “social scientific” arguments about the universal superiority of nonviolent methods are sometimes Trojan horses for ethical claims. Ethical and political arguments are fine, but they must be stated as such.

Nevertheless, data that ascribe such overwhelming superiority to nonviolent methods must of course be taken seriously if our goal is success and not merely scoring rhetorical points. Yet, as the activist/scholar Ben Case pointed out in *ROAR Magazine,* the terms of this debate are seriously muddled. For example, the data set that *Why Civil Resistance Works* uses defines “violent” movements in terms of warfare without “variables for any type of violent action that falls below the threshold for war.” The “radical flank effect” that the data set cites refers to armed insurgencies but “has nothing to do with the effect of protesters breaking windows or scuffling with police.” In this book and subsequent work from Chenoweth, movements like the First Intifada in Palestine or the Tahrir Square movement in Egypt are cleanly categorized as “nonviolent” movements because of the “primacy of nonviolent resistance,” despite the fact that they involved fierce conflicts with authorities and opposition thugs that were far more violent than smashing a few bank windows on an empty DC street.

If their research concludes that “*primarily* nonviolent” movements work more often than “*primarily* violent” ones, then an occasional black bloc in a sea of otherwise nonviolent action does not exclude anti-fascism or the Trump resistance movement more broadly from falling within the category of success that Chenoweth lauds. After all, a few black blocs were formed during the Egyptian movement, which she characterizes positively as a “largely nonviolent revolution [that] succeeded.”[406]

Chenoweth even argues that anti-fascist violence was counterproductive in interwar Germany. She argues that the result of street battles between communists and fascists “was a fragmented left.” “Fascist groups made use of the chaos,” she argues, to achieve “power at the polls.”

As we have seen, however, the interwar Left had been thoroughly fragmented since the end of World War I. Parties were splitting, and anarchists, communists, and socialists were at each other's throats well before fascism entered the picture. Fighting Nazis did not fragment the Left—it was already torn apart.

Street fighting did not propel the Nazis to electoral success either. Hundreds of Nazi, communist, socialist, and republican militiamen died and thousands were wounded in street battles in Germany prior to 1930. If street violence was the key factor in Nazi electoral success, then why did the NSDAP poll a mere 2.6 percent in May 1928? It was not until September 1930 when they reached 18.3 percent that the Nazis gained any electoral traction. What changed was not the level of street violence but the Great Depression. Besides, if street violence was counterproductive for the Left, then why did the KPD increase its electoral support at the same time? Seemingly every German political party and faction had its own paramilitary wing or veterans' association during the interwar period. To retrospectively argue that the KPD essentially should have taken a page out of the MoveOn.org playbook to combat the Nazis is to miss the historical specificity of their programmatic agenda and the contextual nature of public opinion. If violence is inherently so off-putting, then why did 37.3 percent of the German electorate vote Nazi in July 1932?[407] Why did the prominent role of European communist parties in the armed resistance win them their greatest recorded success at the polls in the immediate postwar period?

Chenoweth and Stephan acknowledge that "it is possible that nonviolent resistance could not be used effectively once genocide has broken out in full force"—but one cannot conclude that, they argue, since it was not "contemplated as an overall strategy for resisting the Nazis." If we cannot contemplate the efficacy of strategies that were not actualized, then how can we conclude that a campaign of nonviolence would have been superior to armed struggle in Germany during the 1920s and '30s? Meanwhile, deeming "violent resistance" to the Nazis "an abject failure," Chenoweth and Stephan argue that some examples of "collective nonviolent resistance" in Denmark and Germany were only "occasionally successful."[408] As a Jew who lost ancestors in the Holocaust, the suggestion that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and other examples of armed resistance to the Nazis were "abject

failure[s]" is insulting. These moments gave an entire people pride in a context where they faced extermination. Those brave combatants reclaimed their humanity, if only for a brief window of time. If that is not a transhistorical success then I'm not sure what is. The claim is also demonstrably false—Yugoslav and Albanian partisans, for example, actually won.

Chenoweth's argument that the Nazis "expressed an explicit preference for fighting…guerrilla rather than civil disobedience methods" may have had a kernel of merit in Western Europe where French, Dutch, or Belgian non-Jews were considered human.[409] Yet even the most rudimentary study of the implementation of the "Final Solution" and the broader depopulation of Eastern Europe in the pursuit of *lebensraum* (living space) would show that no appeal to public decency could have interrupted the gears of the Nazi killing machine. Chenoweth and Stephan are correct to point out that nonviolent methods can topple dictators. But in such cases nonviolence needs to be able to leverage public opinion domestically or internationally to make the dictatorship untenable. Where in the world did there exist a population in the early 1940s whose potential outrage could have made Hitler change course?

At the heart of this debate is (or should be) the question of how to gauge and promote successful social struggle. For Chenoweth and some other scholars, the criteria of success are clear: successful tactics and strategies are those that best attract "bystanders and would-be participants"[410] to one's cause while simultaneously reducing their sympathy to the opposition. Based on this quantitative calculus, the historian Daniel Tilles concludes that the Battle of Cable Street had a "positive impact" on the British Union of Fascists because BUF recruitment increased in the immediate aftermath. For Jews, he argued, the conflict "served only to aggravate the situation further" because several hundred fascist youth retaliated by orchestrating the "Mile End Pogrom," where they assaulted Jews and smashed and looted Jewish shops. These conflicts escalated the BUF's rhetorical anti-Semitism, which helped them at the polls in 1937.[411] Similarly, the 1925 communist assassination of four members of the far-right Jeunesses Patriotes caused an immediate increase in JP recruitment.[412] For such scholars the lesson is clear: If a tactic or strategy helps fascist recruitment, then it is flawed.

Yet, the factor that played perhaps the biggest role in stimulating fascist recruitment during the interwar period outside of the Great Depression was leftist electoral success. The fortunes of French fascism, for example, can be traced precisely to the rise and fall of the electoral Left. The first fascist wave rose in 1924 with the establishment of the Cartel des Gauches (literally, Coalition of Leftists) and fell in 1927 when they lost power. Fascism surged again after 1932 in response to the Depression and the election of a left-center majority. French fascism peaked in response to the election of the Popular Front in 1936 and the outbreak of a nonviolent wave of sit-down strikes carried out by two million workers. In such contexts, French fascists appealed to "those who imagined this as the first step toward Bolshevism."[413]

A similar rise and fall of fascism can be charted elsewhere: The victory of the Spanish Popular Front in 1936 galvanized the Right to such a degree that they triggered a civil war. Certainly no one would argue that such results invalidate leftist electoral aspirations. These examples demonstrate that the Far Right thrives off the fear it generates from both violent *and nonviolent* leftist advancement and the progress of broader social justice. The KKK has thrived during eras of black social advancement—the election of Obama in 2008 spurred white-power recruitment, and led to the rise of Donald Trump.

Political success and failure cannot be reduced to a game of numbers, however. The fact that the Battle of Cable Street helped fascist recruitment, triggered fascist violence, and was viewed negatively by Jewish community leadership and the majority of the British public does not prove that it was a strategic error. In fact, this confrontation increased anti-fascist mobilizations, gave Jewish anti-fascists "renewed vigor," propelled the national organizing of the Jewish People's Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism, and improved coordination with leftist anti-fascists.[414] It also became a powerful model for collective anti-fascist resistance that has inspired many to this day.

While the survival of minorities often depends at least in part on their ability to curry favor with the majority, developing collective power and autonomy is a prerequisite for successful struggle, violent or not. In fact, Chenoweth critiques the violence of the civil rights era for its "alienation of

whites." Yet, the Black Power Movement rightly understood that they could not construct their political program with white people in mind if their main goal was black autonomy. Sometimes self-determination needs to be prioritized over winning a popularity contest that is designed for you to lose. This critique of violence during the civil rights era also elides the degree to which the prospect of race war and revolution scared white America enough to make otherwise unthinkable reforms relatively palatable.

Chenoweth's critique of the revolutionary violence of the sixties and seventies reflects how, despite Chenoweth and Stephan's desire to evaluate campaigns based on "the full achievement of [their] stated goals," they tend to assess revolutionary socialist formations based on the goals laid out by their reformist counterparts.

For example, in the first chapter of *Why Civil Resistance Works*, they argue that the nonviolent movement to topple Marcos in the Philippines was far more successful than the insurgency of Maoist guerrillas. This would be true if the Maoists and nonviolent activists had had the exact same goals, but in fact the Maoists designed their strategy to not only topple the dictator but to also wage a people's war aimed at expropriating the ruling class and creating a socialist state.

Likewise, in the United States, although revolutionary socialists and Democrats might all be considered part of "the Trump Resistance," revolutionaries aim to achieve a post-capitalist society, while Democrats aim to achieve a post-Trump presidency. Such different goals dictate different strategies. It is as disingenuous to assess the Black Panthers based on their approval rating among white people as it is to assess Amnesty International based on its level of insurrectionary fervor.

If we are serious about examining what "history shows," we will find that societal sympathy toward, and definitions of, violence and nonviolence vary by time and place. In May 1968 in Paris, students and workers battled the police on the barricades. Yet, when the police brutally demolished the student barricades, the majority of the French public sided with the student rebels.[415] In 2012 in Athens, I saw grandmothers cheering as black-clad youth threw molotovs at the police.

One size never fits all. Not all Americans interpreted civil rights marches that blocked roadways to be peaceful, especially when they met violent police responses. Nor do they always consider such tactics to be peaceful today. In late 2011, an ABC news report of the famous nonviolent Occupy march across the Brooklyn Bridge stated that "the demonstrations have been mostly peaceful until yesterday when 700 were arrested…"[416] And while Chenoweth considers the Black Lives Matter blockade of security checkpoints at the 2017 presidential inauguration to have been nonviolent, a lot of Americans would disagree. Rather than engage in a tactic that would upset so many, they might ask, why not choose an even more socially acceptable method of protesting, like holding a sign?

In short, instead of assessing the public reception of violence and nonviolence in binary terms, it makes more sense to think in terms of a contextually shifting spectrum of sympathy that must be weighed against specific movement goals.

It's a spectrum that does not sit still. In important ways, movements have the power to shift how they are received. For example, whereas prior to the Occupy and BLM movements marching in the street was commonly seen as illegitimately disruptive, these movements have now helped to shift the tactical tastes of significant segments of society through action. This process was only accelerated by the anti–police brutality riots in Ferguson and Baltimore, because these outbursts made street marches seem much more "peaceful" by comparison, even if they blocked traffic. Moreover, these riots pushed police brutality and black oppression to the forefront of the national consciousness in a way that "nonviolent" tactics could not have achieved on their own. Yes, most Americans were repulsed by the sight of looting and burning, but for once they were forced to take note of the scale of injustice. Subsequently, Black Lives Matter cultivated a very significant base of popular support despite having a "violent flank." The Ferguson riots cannot be written out of that story.

If radical political strategy were determined based on the quantitative public favorability of different tactics, then the most moderate methods would almost always win out because they are the hegemon. If Americans had been polled about the best way to launch a movement for economic justice in early 2011, almost no one, myself included, would have approved

of the idea of organizing an encampment in a park in lower Manhattan. For politics to be both popular and revolutionary, organizers must "meet people where they're at," while simultaneously establishing a political/strategic/tactical paradigm that advances the struggle. When we choreograph our politics based on opinion polls, they inevitably mirror the society that we seek to transform.

Those who argue that mass movements develop to the degree that they reflect what most people already believe will be inclined to conclude that militant anti-fascism is at odds with building more broad-based opposition to the Far Right. But militant anti-fascists do not argue that violence is the solution to every political problem. Before addressing the relationship between "violent" tactics and movement building within antifascism, let's take a moment to survey some creative nonviolent tactics that anti-fascists have employed.

★ ★ ★

In 2008, Central Texas ARA was organizing a protest against an upcoming demonstration by the National Socialist Movement in Tyler, Texas. A woman of color in the group named Maya "pushed the idea of performance instead of beat-downs" in strategy discussions. Although some of the men in the group thought the idea was "ridiculous," Maya convinced them to construct an art piece with two 50-foot poles adorned with purple and black tinsel (left over from a recent Halloween party) that was used to hang papier-mâché Nazi dolls. On the day of the demonstration about thirty-five antifa and groups of community antiracists stood behind the anti-fascist art installation chanting "Follow your leader" (a common antifa slogan suggesting that Nazis kill themselves like Hitler). The noise of anti-fascist drums and the chanting drowned out the Nazi bullhorn so that "their message was not heard." Maya remembered the action fondly for its ability to "shut it down in a way that more moderate folks could get behind."[417]

The tradition of using noise to drown out fascist speakers dates back to the beginning of the anti-fascist struggle. For example, in 1925 a group of two hundred French communists attempted to disrupt a meeting of the fascist Jeunesses Patriotes by singing the "Internationale."[418] In 1933,

communists disrupted a meeting of the British Union of Fascists in Manchester by singing the “Red Flag.”[419]

Anti-fascist singing also played an important part in shutting down fascism in Denmark. In 1999, an elderly man with Nazi sympathies named Gunnar Gram died, bequeathing a large three-story building in Aalborg to the Danish Nazi Party. The party immediately moved in and draped a six-foot-long swastika down the front of the building. Not only was this highly disturbing to the neighbors, it was dangerous, since the Nazi house attracted regional white supremacists who often got drunk and started fights in the surrounding streets. As the Danish antifa Ole explained, since the house was far from any radical left hub, “organizers couldn’t fight them the same way.” So, instead of physically confronting them, for several years locals organized nightly singing vigils outside the building. Such actions tapped into the wartime Danish anti-fascist tradition of organizing public choral events as a way to get around Nazi bans on political gatherings. Thus, song became resistance under the Nazi occupation, and in modern times, too, it could severely agitate Nazis, such as the ones in Aalborg. They attempted to respond by blaring Nazi music on loudspeakers, but the singers would drown them out. Meanwhile organizers also put up posters around town with photographs of the faces of the Nazis, and encouraged shopkeepers not to sell to them. Over time the constant singing and isolation “broke down their fighting spirit so that it wasn’t fun to be a Nazi anymore,” Ole recounted. The definitive end of the Nazi house came when Gunnar Gram’s eighty-year-old half-sister Edith Craig—from Butte, Montana—successfully sued for the right to the building because the Nazi witnesses to Gram’s wills were its beneficiaries, which was in violation of Danish law. The Danish protesters sang “We Shall Overcome” at the victory celebration in Craig’s honor.[420]

The anti-fascist dictum “No platform for fascists” also applies to their posters, graffiti, and other propaganda. Antifascists place a great deal of emphasis on controlling public space in all senses, and therefore they devote a significant amount of energy to eliminating any public trace of fascism. For instance, in early 2016, a group called the “Antifa Sisters” formed in response to neo-Nazi attacks on autonomous spaces in Slovenia. The Sisters’ playfully creative style of covering up fascist graffiti was on

display in their *Ghostbusters* parody video, where they used a "graffometer" to determine levels of "rightwing wall contamination."[421]

In Warsaw, Poland, over the last few years a group of antifascists organized regular anti-fascist graffiti outings to strike back against a growing far-right presence. The first time they did it, they planned for a month, to make sure they were prepared for any possible confrontations with fascists, the police, or "overzealous neighbors." They drew a map to determine the five most important locations to hit, gathered supplies such as spray cans, gloves, "easily disposable" clothing, and pepper spray for self-defense, and even practiced getting in and out of the car quickly. When the night came, there was one encounter with some nationalists who threw bottles at them, but things basically went smoothly: They changed fascist slogans like "Poland for the Poles" to the phonetically similar absurdist slogan "Soil for Potatoes."

A Serbian antifa named Stefan waged a similar campaign on his own in 2012: When he came upon wheat-pasted posters from the fascist Serbian Action in his neighborhood of Belgrade, he immediately tore them down… and noticed them back up again an hour later. He retaliated by plastering antifa stickers all over the Serbian Action posters…only to find Serbian Action stickers in favor of "Traditional courtship in marriage" and other conservative slogans plastered on top of his stickers in response. Every day for six months Stefan battled with an anonymous fascist for control of his neighborhood. About four months into the conflict Stefan saw a guy putting up a sticker down the street as he got off the bus. The two locked eyes but Stefan wasn't sure if this was his nemesis. In any event, Stefan persisted, and eventually the Serbian Action propaganda ceased to appear. He simply outlasted them.[422]

Serbian anti-fascists from the southern town of Nis carried out a different kind of public action in April 2013. Earlier that year, fascists had spray-painted swastikas all over a statue of the famed Roma singer Šaban Bajramović. Anti-fascists responded by organizing a cleaning action to restore the statue. They left behind a sign that read "Long live Šaban… death to fascism!" The publicity of this action turned this Roma pop singer into an anti-fascist symbol.[423]

Other anti-fascist tactics target online fascist organizing. An American anti-fascist recounted a highly successful long-term campaign that his group had helped organize in the early 2000s to infiltrate and destroy a large national far-right network that thrived on intimidating and harassing leftists. While taking rigorous security precautions, the anti-fascists made a number of fake profiles of themselves on the far-right group's online forums, and started to share doctored photos of fake actions that these fake members had allegedly carried out. As time passed, the undercover anti-fascists came to constitute fake groups that were awarded chapter status in several locations. One of the anti-fascists even gained enough clout to enter the organization's central board and gain access to all of the group's information files, including their profiles of leftist targets. Once the organization had been thoroughly infiltrated, the anti-fascists revealed their scheme. This generated so much distrust and infighting that the organization collapsed soon thereafter.

In Copenhagen, starting in the 1990s, antifa concocted a very simple scheme that turned out to be quite successful: They called the parents of fascist teens to let them know what their children had gotten caught up in. Danish antifa also created an "exit group" to help Nazis who wanted to leave their movement. My Danish antifa source Ole told me that in the nineties the pressure antifa put on fascists would sometimes lead them to write hostile e-mails to the anti-fascists with threats. Rather than ignoring them, Danish anti-fascists would engage with the fascists as a "psychological tactic" to nudge them toward leaving their group. After a while, a significant number would start to talk about how they had grown disillusioned or how they just had a kid and wanted to "get out." Over time the anti-fascists would come up with ways for the disillusioned fascists to prove their sincerity by sharing information about their organization or upcoming actions. Once the given antifa group was satisfied, they would inform other antifa groups that the individuals had made a clean break with their former fascist friends.[424]

★ ★ ★

Discussions of violence in the context of anti-fascism or any other topic must address issues of masculinity and feminism. As the Norwegian antifa

Dag remarked, “Whenever violence is part of the political struggle you will have problems with machismo.” He cited his experience organizing in Oslo and Trondheim, when anti-fascist groups sometimes allied with apolitical football hooligans to fight the Nazis, alliances he feared ran the risk of exacerbating macho dynamics.

But no matter the country, my interviewees were unanimous about the problem of machismo, especially in the eighties and nineties, though they pointed out that it was usually not much worse than in the rest of the Left, let alone in society at large. Paul Bowman of Leeds AFA recounted that such dynamics actually worsened in his group as the membership transformed from mainly students and unionists to ex-hooligans. It became a bit of a “boys’ club” with “a few token women.” Unfortunately, the “classic” AFA arrangement, according to Bowman, was for the women to scout the opponent “while the men drank in the pub until it was time to fight.”[425]

Though unevenly, feminist ideas gradually penetrated the antifa movement in various countries in the late 1990s. Swedish AFA cofounder Magnus explained that in the nineties the Swedish and other northern European movements were heavily influenced by the writings of Klaus Viehmann. While serving fifteen years in prison (several in isolation) for direct actions as a part of 2 June Movement, a German urban guerrilla group, Viehmann tried to conceptualize a way to connect the feminist, antiracist, and social-revolutionary Left in Germany. He was especially intrigued by the writings of Hazel V. Carby on the concept of “triple oppression”—popularized by the black communist Claudia Jones in the 1960s—which analyzed the experience of the black woman under capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. Two years before his 1993 release, Viehmann published *Three Into One: The Triple Oppression of Racism, Sexism, and Class*, based on discussions with various comrades in prison that synthesized the black feminist concept of “triple oppression” with autonomous and antiauthoritarian politics.

Over time, the term triple oppression faded as leftists began to talk about “interactions of oppressions” more broadly. Eventually, Magnus recounted, more and more adopted the term “intersectionality,” coined by the law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s. And by the late 1990s, he

observed, women played leading roles in many Swedish antifa groups. Confirming this, Dolores C. from Stockholm AFA remembered how the women in her group met every other week to discuss patriarchal behavior exhibited by the men. “Almost everyone was involved in gender-based discussion groups” during this time, she remembered.[426] Dolores also remembered—with a laugh—how whenever antifa women beat up Swedish Nazis, the Nazis would always lie and say it had been men. For Dolores, anti-fascist violence could be very “empowering when you’ve been raised to believe you’re not capable.”

In the United States, Maya from Central Texas ARA bemoaned the tendency of men in her group in the late 2000s to assume that their women comrades needed protection. As a result, Maya and other women enjoyed taking advantage of “an unwritten rule in the state of Texas” that apparently states that if a man lays a hand on a woman she “gets free reign to beat his ass and not get in trouble.” With that in mind, Maya and other women “exploited the misogyny within the broader culture” by provoking fascist men into shoving them, thereby giving them the green light to unleash their fury before the police took the men away. According to Maya, none of these antifa women did any jail time in Texas except one who was locked up for a single night after she bit off a chunk of a Nazi’s ear.

Yet, even when carried out by women, such violence can draw backlash from within the Left. As Christy, formerly of Rose City Antifa in Portland, Oregon remembered,

> …many leftist or liberal opponents to antifa would conflate militancy, even nonviolent militancy, with machismo. This was insulting. And personally infuriating. These attempts to circle around and take potshots from a more radical position usually rested on a foundation of gender essentialism. At its core, they believed our womenled group wasn’t appropriately feminine enough.[427]

Whether excluded from militancy or critiqued for taking part, women face a variety of gendered challenges when they take an active part in the anti-

fascist movement. That is part of the reason why some German antifa have created feminist groups called “fantifa.”

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Any movement that engages with violence must remain vigilant against the tendency for the violence to overtake political goals. This is what allegedly happened with some ARA groups toward the end of the 2000s, according to New Jersey ARA organizer Howie. In his opinion, the “culture of insurrectionary machismo became more central” over time to the point where it “started to feel like a highly political gang” that was “more into fighting than winning.”[428] Other anti-fascists I spoke with were highly attuned to this pitfall. An RCA member complained about an “overemphasis” on the black bloc by new anti-fascists without considering it in a larger strategic framework. “If all you have is a hammer,” she observed, “all your problems look like nails.”[429]

Despite common misconceptions, the black bloc is not an organization or a specific group. It is a tactic of anonymous, coordinated street militancy used predominantly, though not exclusively, by anarchists and other antiauthoritarians that originated in the 1980s among the German *Autonomen*. The rationale for the black bloc tactic is simple: In an era of constant surveillance militant tactics require some level of anonymity. While masking up and wearing uniformly black clothing do not always entirely conceal one’s identity, failing to do so drastically increases the odds of being identified by the police and/or fascists. Paul Bowman recounted how British anti-fascists disagreed with the black bloc tactic. As he explained, “in AFA we encouraged people to avoid dressing in black because it makes you look very visible in a large crowd. Instead, we encouraged people to dress like football casuals because we wanted the police to be unsure if we were fascists, anti-fascists, or football hooligans.” It is true that in a large crowd of “normally” dressed people, the police can home in on a mass of black. But advances in video surveillance, facial-recognition software, and the pervasiveness of smartphones have made it so that any public political moment can be more closely scrutinized later.

Partly as a result, a London anti-fascist named Jim explained to me, the methods and style of British anti-fascism have changed in recent decades.

Jim began his anti-fascist militancy with a group called No Platform, which followed AFA before cofounding its own mainly anarchist successor group called Antifa around 2002 or 2003. Jim chose the name Antifa after hanging out with anti-fascists in Germany and taking in their "Euro-punk aesthetic." As opposed to AFA's reclamation of the red triangle symbol used by the Nazis to label communists, Antifa incorporated the name, style, flags, and other symbols of continental anti-fascism, while maintaining the AFA organizing model. Antifa was largely crushed by state repression around 2009 following two trials for conflicts with boneheads. Several years later it was followed by the Anti-Fascist Network (AFN), which still operates today.

Jim now belongs to London Anti-Fascists, which was formed in 2013 and is affiliated with the AFN. Jim and his comrades mask up for some demonstrations and not others. Casuals usually make more sense when a dozen antifa need to carry out a specific action, he explained, but black bloc methods can be effective with marches in the hundreds.[430] Similarly, anti-fascists in Madrid often march without masks in large symbolic demonstrations, while saving the bandannas and balaclavas for confrontational actions.

There are a number of legitimate critiques of the black bloc. It is certainly not the best choice for all political situations. But rather than evaluating it in the abstract, it makes more sense to assess its strengths and weaknesses when faced with specific political contexts.

As I argued in *Translating Anarchy*, historically, groups and movements that sometimes form black blocs have managed to gain some measure of public support when the rationale behind the formation of the bloc has been intelligible. Some of the most notable examples have come from the use of the black bloc in defense of squats, outrage at police brutality, and opposition to Nazis. Over recent decades, Turkish migrants in Germany or Syrian refugees in Greece have recognized that at times some of the only people standing between them and fascist violence happened to be wearing black. Although the media backlash against recent anti-fascist blocs has been strong, particularly in the United States, the fact that some have publicly defended, or at least sympathized with black blocs—such as those that shut down Milo Yiannopoulos, or confronted alt-right seig-heiling

demonstrations in Berkeley—demonstrates that at the very least this form of militant anti-fascism is in the process of establishing some measure of public intelligibility. The Pastel Bloc of masked-up street medics with anti-fascist shields wearing pastel colors in the Bay Area is a recent creative variation on this theme.

The anti-fascists I spoke with tended to argue that there was a far greater degree of sympathy for antifa among progressives than the media recognized. Murray from Baltimore argued that people tended to "see the importance of antifa in prohibiting the growth of the people who, if given the opportunity, would like to murder them all." In his opinion, within the broader Left, militant anti-fascism "acts in same kind of space that sabotage exists in in the labor movement"—people may not acknowledge it publicly, but they can see its tangible benefits on the ground.

Similarly, in many European contexts, anti-fascism is absolutely necessary to create space for other leftist organizing. Camille from SCALP Besançon told me of an instance in 2008 when thirty Nazis attacked a demonstration of postal and hospital workers. The police were nowhere to be found, but a dozen local antifa charged the Nazis and beat them back as they faced each other across a narrow bridge. According to Camille, "All the workers from the hospitals and the post office applauded us and were very happy to have young anti-fascists by their side."

Likewise in Sweden, where an activist named Stina, who organized with "No One Is Illegal" in Stockholm in the late 2000s, remembered how "Nazi violence was ever-present," and she recalled antifa protecting one immigrant-rights demonstration from Nazis with knives and bottles. "Regardless of people's personal thoughts on antifa strategy," she said, "there was a general understanding that we needed that direct and more confrontational activism."

It wasn't just the self-defense that made communities more comfortable with antifa, Daniel from Madrid suggested to me; he felt that much of the alarm that the spectacle of masked antifa creates was dispelled when small groups of anti-fascists had a chance to organize and establish meaningful relationships in a community. To some extent, that public perception of militant anti-fascist tactics may also be colored by class distinctions that the antifa community work could penetrate. For example, back in the United

States, ARA cofounder Kieran believes that “most working-class people respect folks that stand up and are willing to defend themselves.”[431]

Still, despite his support for militant small-group antifa organizing, Kieran, who now organizes with the more public-facing Twin Cities IWW GDC, argues that “people try to divide the concept of a mass from a militant response, that it’s only possible to do one or the other. And I think that we really want to challenge that. What we think is needed is both”—popular organizing *and* anti-fascist confrontation. Other antifascists I spoke with agreed. Xtn who was active with Chicago ARA in the nineties, said, “If we continue to function on a small-scale affinity group model, then we’re not addressing questions of how we interact with broader communities under attack.” Dominic from Germany agreed, emphasizing the need to transcend “isolated subcultural politics” in order to engage “the losers of neo-liberal politics” who might be sympathetic toward fascism. Dolores C. from Sweden concurred, arguing that anti-fascism requires that “we build movements to show our solution” to popular issues.[432]

Anti-fascists have, in fact, engaged in popular politics in a variety of ways. Some groups have participated in coalitions with unions, political parties, and community organizations to stage mass resistance to Nazi marches in Dresden, Salem, Roskilde, and elsewhere. But not all antifa agree on this strategy. The Norwegian antifa Dag recounted how organizing with mainstream political parties to block neo-Nazis in Trondheim drew the ire of some Swedish antifa who refuse to work with liberal parties. It was a reaction Dag strongly opposed. According to him, the antifa goal is to isolate the fascists entirely. “Militant antifa in Norway,” he explained, “have been aware that you need both strategies. You can’t only be militant and only work with the radicals that agree with you.”

Luís, of Germany’s Antifaschistische Linke International in Göttingen, told me that many autonomous antifa had joined a more public radical platform called the Interventionist Left (Interventionistische Linke) partly to “have an amplified voice in politics.” Ironically, he pointed out, many of the most active organizers behind the popular anti-Nazi blockades in Dresden were militant antifa—because you “need coalition building to allow yourself the tactical space to achieve the political goal and to send the

message to the government that if they protect Nazi demos we're going to burn your city to the ground."

"We could only do what we do and get away with it," Luís said, "because of that interplay" between mass protest and militant action, because it would have been easy for the German police to shut down more isolated black blocs. Still, Luís was also critical of the mass blockade because in the absence of an anticapitalist critique, they ran the risk of simply echoing the German state's official anti-fascism.

In France, militant anti-fascists work toward merging small-group militant action with broader mobilization by working through intermediary and mass-level assemblies. As Camille from Besançon explained, the first level of organizing is the "antifa radical group," and the second level is the "antifa collective," such as Vigilances 69 in Lyon or Comité Antifa St-Etienne, mixing people from unions and community activists. Organizers in Toulouse are currently "experimenting" with a third level, "the anti-fascist assembly," which groups together other activist and leftist organizations with antifa collectives. Even when inactive, these larger bodies act like "cells of vigilance that are ready to be activated in case of Nazi activities," says Camille. She says French antifa participate in these larger collectives "to develop anti-fascism in civil society" as a "tool for people to discover theoretical and practical tools for struggling."[433]

In Spain, too, similar organizational models have been put into practice. In response to the emergence of the fascist Hogar Social in Madrid around 2015, members of the Popular Assembly of Carabanchel (an outlying neighborhood of Madrid) who were affiliated with the 15M movement created an open *Asamblea antifascista* with allies in the housing movement, neighbors, and assorted radicals. The new assembly distributed a pamphlet exposing the neo-Nazi affiliations of the Hogar Social members, and held intercultural celebrations such as antiracist hip hop festivals to appeal to youth. They also organized a large demonstration under the slogan "*Barrio para todas*" (The Neighborhood for Everyone) that inspired other assemblies to organize their own demonstrations. The most notable was *Madrid para todas* (Madrid for Everyone), which was a large assemblage of neighborhood assemblies that brought thousands of people out onto the

street on May 21, 2016, behind pink and black anti-fascist flags to emphasize their opposition to machismo.

For Daniel, a Carabanchel anti-fascist organizer, the open, popular struggle of *Madrid para todas* and the more militant direct actions of smaller security-culture-oriented antifa groups represent the "two faces of anti-fascism…and we don't forget either face." These two struggles are "parallel" to each other, he said, but "they do not mix" directly. Many militant anti-fascists have occasion to put on both "faces," but they take care to distinguish between the two.[434]

Madrid para todas poster, 2016. "Against fascism and all forms of discrimination." [MADRID PARA TODAS]

Many anti-fascists aim to transcend the dichotomy between "official" antifa and the rest of the population. Ole from Denmark lamented this problem in the nineties, when leftists started to see antifa as "professionals who take care of the Nazis for the rest of us. We can't be part of them, we just call them when the Nazis come." In that way, Ole suggested, the presence of militant antifa could make others *less likely* to organize against

the Far Right. My source, Ian from New York, said he felt the same fear, so to move beyond it, the goal should be to "give people the tools of no platforming, researching, and identifying threats" so they can self-organize.

In 2009, the Dutch anti-fascist movement was forced to put these principles into practice when the fascist Dutch Peoples-Union (NVU) moved their marches from major cities to smaller towns to appeal to a wider population. The anti-fascist/autonomous movement, which had been at a low point because of the suppression of squats and, frankly, burnout, was forced to shift its focus toward mobilizing local populations to physically oppose the fascists. The strategy was called "*Laat ze niet lopen*" (Do not let them walk): Once the location of a march was publicized, a crew of ten to twelve antifa would travel to the town, establish contacts, put up posters, and set up an office offering legal and press resources. On the day of the fascist demonstration, organizers would pass out maps with a phone number for the latest news and directions, and post the information online. The Dutch antifa Job Polak remarked that the strategy was "in general, surprisingly effective" because

> …a critical mass of groups like the local immigrant youth, the local football hooligans and the traveler community, would come out in their hundreds and put pressure on the Nazi march in a way that even a block of veteran autonomous militants never would, by chucking everything and anything at them including piles of dog-shit in their faces.[435]

Such tactics successfully shut down NVU mobilizing.

Granada actúa (Granada Takes Action) is an anti-fascist affinity group that aims to generalize this kind of resistance in Spain. Formed in early 2017 in response to the spread of Hogar Social to their city, the members of Granada actúa chose not to fashion themselves as a typical antifa group. Instead, they chose a more general name and eschewed covering their faces. Karpa from Granada actúa acknowledged that revealing their faces was dangerous, but said, "We believe that going with our faces covered or escorted by lines of police distances us from the people. We don't criticize those who decide to cover their face, but in Granada actúa we don't do it."

The group's goal, he said, is to "raise the consciousness of the working class so that they can be the ones to throw the fascists out of their neighborhoods." In fact, shortly after the group's formation the police had to escort Hogar Social members out of a Granada neighborhood to protect them from an angry crowd, "including apolitical people."[436]

Some American anti-fascists aim to similarly merge militancy and popular organizing. Examples include the IWW GDC, Redneck Revolt, and the Workers Defense Guard in Vermont, although New Jersey ARA veteran Howie argues that the two forms of organizing cannot be entirely merged into one group. In his opinion, "People have to pick a side—either confrontation within a tight-knit affinity group model, or a mass model and reign in the street brawling." Although GDC organizers aim to merge militancy with mass participation, Erik D. from the Twin Cities acknowledges that public groups can't "be as directly confrontational much of the time…getting there requires a long-term strategy to move people from relative comfort to greater militancy."[437]

According to a member of Rose City Antifa, however, "anti-fascism is really in many ways the antithesis of mass-movement building," because antifa often find themselves in the unpopular position of calling out "fascist entryism in the Left." On one occasion RCA got a serious amount of flak from the local Left for revealing that a popular hippie involved in a local co-op had become an anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist who regularly attended Holocaust denial events and other far-right gatherings. Overlooking this would have made RCA more "popular" with the local Left, but in such cases the goal of antifa organizing is to "serve as a wedge," as former RCA organizer Christy phrased it, to break the bonds that connect racists to the community. That having been said, Christy also notes that public support can be absolutely vital:

> Having your city, or at least parts of it, on your side means you have eyes on workplaces, colleges, or neighborhoods beyond your immediate circles. If someone is putting up homophobic stickers in one area, someone who lives there will send your group an e-mail. If someone's classmate has started trying to recruit for a "white student union," you will hear about it.

> When it comes time to call a neo-Nazi's boss to ask that he be fired, more people will call if they support the work your group does. If one of your members is arrested or hospitalized, more people will donate.[438]

Rather than imposing what is essentially an electoral mindset of appealing to the lowest common denominator in relation to the fascist threat, anti-fascists prioritize working with marginal communities to neutralize any potential threats, whether it's popular with "the majority" or not. This perspective is especially important in anti-fascist work given the historical fact that those who have suffered the most under fascist regimes have not had the backing of most of the rest of society. Instead of starting with public opinion and working backward toward strategies and tactics to placate the majority—like politicians—anti-fascists start with the immediate task of combating the Far Right. Sometimes that involves mobilizing working-class and immigrant communities, sometimes it does not. But either way, anti-fascists believe that developing substantive popular support must stem from anti-fascist politics and anti-fascist action, not the other way around.

EVERYDAY ANTI-FASCISM

The exceptional spectacle of anti-fascist organizers confronting Nazis is not enough to stem the tide of Trumpism. Moreover, even the success of such physical militancy relies in part on its public reception. Therefore, we must pair our focus on organized anti-fascism with an understanding of a deeper everyday anti-fascism[439] that dictates the terrain upon which such struggles occur.

In order to understand everyday anti-fascism, we must bear in mind that the fascist regimes of the past could not have survived without a broad layer of public support. Over the years, historical research has demonstrated that the process of demonizing the marginalized required the privileging of the favored, making many explicit or implicit allies for Mussolini, Hitler, and other leaders. If fascism required societal support for the destruction of "artificial," "bourgeois" norms such as the "rights of man" in developing its hypernationalism, then today we must be alert to the ongoing campaign to delegitimize the ethical and political standards that we have at our disposal to fight back.

In the United States after Trump's victory, for example, we've had a dangerous mix of mainstream conservatives who do not want to appear racist, and alt-right "race realists" who all accuse the "Left" of so over-using the term racism that it is rendered meaningless—in other words, no one is racist anymore…or we are all racist now? It all presents a major difference between the previous paradigm, where the Left accused the Right of being racist, and then the Right accused the Left of being the *real* racists because they focused so much on race, all amid a developing paradigm where the alt-right and those they have influenced try to drain all power from the accusation.

Everyday fascists are the ardent Trump supporters who "tell it like it is" by actively trying to dismantle the taboos against oppression that the movements for feminism, black liberation, queer liberation, and others have given actual blood, sweat, and tears to establish as admittedly shoddy, and far too easily manipulatable, bulwarks against outright fascism. These

social norms are constantly contested and are unfortunately subject to resignification in oppressive directions, such as when George W. Bush sold the war in Afghanistan as a crusade for women's rights. Yet the fact that politicians have felt the need to engage with the norms that popular resistance have established means that they left themselves open to political attacks on grounds that they at least tacitly acknowledged. A major concern with Trump and the alt-right, however, is that they hope to drain these standards of their meaning.

Liberals tend to examine issues of sexism or racism in terms of the question of belief or what is "in one's heart." What is often overlooked in such conversations is that what we truly believe is sometimes much less important than what social constraints allow us to articulate or act upon. This issue is at the center of questions of social progress or regression.

While one should always be wary about painting large groups of people with a broad brush, it is clear that ardent Trump supporters voted for their candidate either *because of* or *despite* his misogyny, racism, ableism, Islamophobia, and many more hateful traits. There is certainly a significant difference between "because of" and "despite" in this context, and sensitivity to the difference should attune us to the importance of mass organizing, which can divert potential fascist-sympathizers away from the Far Right. It is always important to distinguish between ideologues and their capricious followers, yet we cannot overlook how these popular bases of support create the foundations for fascism to manifest itself.

Everyday anti-fascism applies an anti-fascist outlook to any kind of interaction with fascists, everyday or otherwise. It refuses to accept the dangerous notion that homophobia is just someone's "opinion" to which they are entitled. It refuses to accept opposition to the basic proposal that "black lives matter" as a simple political disagreement. An anti-fascist outlook has no tolerance for "intolerance." It will not "agree to disagree." To those who argue that this would make us no better than Nazis, we must point out that our critique is not against violence, incivility, discrimination, or disrupting speeches in the abstract, but against those who do so in the service of white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, class oppression, and genocide. The point here is not tactics; it is politics.

If the goal of normal anti-fascist politics is to make it so that Nazis cannot appear uncontested in public, then the goal of everyday anti-fascism is to increase the social cost of oppressive behavior to such a point that those who promote it see no option but for their views to recede into hiding.

Certainly, this goal had not been fully accomplished—by a long shot—prior to the rise of Trump, but his election and the growth of the alt-right has made this task a matter of life and death. Ricky John Best, Taliesin Myrddin Namkai Meche, and Micah Fletcher were everyday anti-fascists who answered the call by defending two young women, one a Muslim wearing the hijab, from a white supremacist on a train in Portland, Oregon in May 2017. Tragically, the attacker, who had attended an alt-right "free speech" march a month earlier, slashed the everyday anti-fascists with a knife, killing Best and Meche and hospitalizing Fletcher. Their heroic examples epitomize the daily vigilance against bigotry that we should all live up to.[440]

Changing hearts and minds is ideal and can happen. One striking example occurred with the case of Derek Black, the son of the founder of the Nazi Stormfront site who disavowed white supremacy through conversations with friends at the New College of Florida. But apart from the rareness of such a development, one point that should be remembered is that Derek Black's white-supremacist ideas, and the antiracist ideas of the New College students he met, did not meet each other on an equal playing field. Black was embarrassed about being a neo-Nazi and that fact only came out once others publicized it. Why was he embarrassed? Because Nazism has been so thoroughly discredited that he felt like he was in a tiny minority, at odds with everyone around him.

In other words, the antiracist movements of the past constructed the high social cost that white-supremacist views carried, thereby paving the way for someone like Derek Black to open himself up to an antiracist outlook. Hearts and minds are never changed in a vacuum; they are products of the worlds around them and the structures of discourse that give them meaning.

Any time someone takes action against transphobic, racist bigots—from calling them out, to boycotting their business, to shaming them for their oppressive beliefs, to ending a friendship unless someone shapes up—they are putting an anti-fascist outlook into practice that contributes to a broader

everyday antifascism that pushes back the tide against the alt-right, Trump, and his loyal supporters. Our goal should be that in twenty years those who voted for Trump are too uncomfortable to share that fact in public. We may not always be able to change someone's beliefs, but we sure as hell can make it politically, socially, economically, and sometimes physically costly to articulate them.

CONCLUSION:

GOOD NIGHT WHITE PRIDE (OR WHITENESS IS INDEFENSIBLE)

First they came for the Muslims and we said "Not This Time Motherfers!"***

—Popular slogan from protests against the Trump travel ban in early 2017

ln late January 2017, thousands of protesters swarmed international airports across the United States to protest and physically disrupt the implementation of Donald Trump's Muslim ban. Following the rise of "fascism" to the second-most-searched-for word on the Merriam-Webster website in 2016 (behind "surreal"), many protesters associated the Muslim ban with Nazi anti-Semitism and therefore sought to put the wisdom of Martin Niemöller's classic "First they came for the communists…" quote into practice by standing up for the first to be persecuted. "Not This Time Motherf***ers!" is exactly the right kind of response to the persecution of any group, and Niemöller's famous statement deserves credit for inspiring many to take such a stand.

Yet, the historical record shows that if you were an average person of the dominant demographic in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, or most other authoritarian regimes, "they" would almost never "come for" you. As Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband conclude in *What We Knew*, "far from living in a constant state of fear and discontent, most Germans led happy

and even normal lives in Nazi Germany…Although most of [those we interviewed] violated the ubiquitous laws of the Third Reich at one point or another…most tell us that they did not fear being arrested."[441]

Anti-fascists must not only concern themselves with those who organize on behalf of white supremacy and those who casually parrot racist slogans, but also those who never say anything at all. Fascist regimes thrive on widespread support, or at least consent, by cultivating pride in, and fear of the loss of, a variety of identities, privileges, and traditions. One of the most important in the context of the resurgent Far Right in the United States is whiteness.

Despite the popular perception that race is "natural" or "timeless," the biological notion of race is a modern European invention. When race was invented, however, it was invented as "the child of racism, not the father," as Ta-Nehisi Coates points out, and "the process of naming 'the people' has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy."[442] Whiteness has never existed independent of its location at the top of the racial hierarchy. Thus, as Joel Olson explained in *The Abolition of White Democracy*, " 'White' or 'Caucasian' is not a neutral physical description of certain persons but a political project of securing and protecting privileges…"[443] The preeminent position of whiteness atop the racial hierarchy that birthed it makes it an identity of a very different sort from blackness, for example, which was the direct result of the destruction of the identities of kidnapped Africans who were placed on the bottom of the hierarchy. Whiteness is "a moral choice (for there are no white people)" James Baldwin explained, and "we—who were not Black before we got here either…were defined as Black by the slave trade…"[444]

My Jewish and Irish ancestors were not considered "white" when they first arrived in this country in the early twentieth century, but over time they were gradually welcomed into what Joel Olson terms "white democracy." The meaning and boundaries of such social constructs shift over time, but we have the power to strike back at the racial hierarchy that underpins the very essence of whiteness. This does not mean adopting a conservative "color-blind" outlook, but rather targeting sources of white privilege and struggling in solidarity with the disinherited of the world.

This does not mean exterminating people who are currently categorized as white, but abolishing the classificatory scheme that renders them so. W.E.B. Du Bois's "The Souls of White Folk" from 1920 reflects on the horrors of the First World War to point out what the victims of colonialism and imperialism had known for generations: "This is not Europe gone mad; this is not aberration nor insanity; this *is* Europe; this seeming Terrible is the real soul of white culture—back of all culture—stripped and visible today."[445] The advent of fascism only exacerbated such horror.

And while many European and American commentators saw the Holocaust and the rise of fascism as a lamentable deviation from the Enlightenment traditions of "Western Civilization," Aimé Césaire rightly concluded that "*Europe is indefensible*."[446] So too must we add that, as a modern identity forged through slavery and class rule, *whiteness is indefensible*.

The only long-term solution to the fascist menace is to undermine its pillars of strength in society grounded not only in white supremacy but also in ableism, heteronormativity, patriarchy, nationalism, transphobia, class rule, and many others. This long-term goal points to the tensions that exist in defining anti-fascism, because at a certain point destroying fascism is really about promoting a revolutionary socialist alternative (in my opinion one that is antiauthoritarian and nonhierarchical) to a world of crisis, poverty, famine, and war that breeds fascist reaction.

When I asked Jim from London Anti-Fascists how to combat popular far-right parties, he replied, "We can't just hope to defeat a far-right electoral project in the way we would defeat a fascist street movement. Instead we need to be better at our politics than they are at theirs."[447]

Undoubtedly street blockades and other forms of confrontational opposition can be very useful against any political opponent, but once far-right formations have managed to broadcast their xenophobic, dystopian platforms, it is incumbent upon us to drown them out with even better alternatives to the austerity and incompetence of the governing parties of the Right and Left.

On its own, militant anti-fascism is necessary but not sufficient to build a new world in the shell of the old.

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APPENDIX A:

ADVICE FROM THE ANTI-FASCISTS OF THE PAST AND PRESENT TO THOSE OF THE FUTURE

I asked many of my sources and interviewees for this book if they had any advice for new anti-fascists based on their experience. What follows is a selection of their responses. I present these quotes without commentary in an effort to create a kind of curated primary source for those starting to organize today against the Far Right. Some of the pieces of advice contradict each other, but this simply reflects the diversity of opinions within the movement. This is a collection of general advice, not a detailed, nuts-and-bolts "how-to" guide. After some general points, the section is loosely organized into Organizing Strategies, Intelligence, Security, Tactics, and Internal Dynamics.

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"Every situation is different."

—NICCOLÒ GARUFI, ITALY

"There's no one piece of advice."

—MALAMAS SOTIRIOU, GREECE

“Get in touch with anti-fascist groups in a city near you, or in your country, or any antifa anywhere that you respect and ask them how they did it!”

—ANTIFA INTERNATIONAL

“Don’t copy what other people are doing…there’s no template…work with the circumstances you have.”

—OLE, DENMARK

“Show up and make sure you feel confident that you belong—you do.”

—ERIK D., MINNESOTA

“Be willing to make mistakes, but remember that making mistakes has gotten people hurt, jailed, and killed.”

—MURRAY, BALTIMORE

“Don’t lose track of what we’re fighting *for*.”

—OLE, DENMARK

“The most important thing with anti-fascism is to show up.”

—K. BULLSTREET, U.K.[448]

ORGANIZING STRATEGIES

“The most important thing you can do is never do [antifa] alone…create at least a small group you trust.”

—MURRAY, BALTIMORE

“If you are alone, you are just a gang.”

—NICCOLÒ GARUFI, ITALY

“Don’t get isolated.”

—DOLORES C., SWEDEN

“Building a group on the basis of a circle of friends and later inviting some other people, is very effective.”

—K, POLAND

“Don’t just keep adding people to your group, establish a core.”

—IGGY, ATLANTA

“The most important thing is the cultivation of solidarity between groups.”

—ELIANA KANAVELI, GREECE

“You need to adapt your strategy to the groups you are fighting and to some degree to the place you are operating in.”

—DAG, NORWAY

“Take your time, and don’t get caught up with ideology. It excludes the people. Try to start from the ‘living together.’ Be able to talk to your neighbors and establish a presence in your community.”

—CAMILLE, FRANCE

“The best way to combat fascism is to build a broader left-wing movement.”

—OLE, DENMARK

“Frame anti-fascism in terms of working-class self-defense.”

—KIERAN, MINNEAPOLIS

“Something that should never be forgotten in the antifascist struggle is that to reach the working class and gain their support you have to have done a lot of work previously. You can’t gain the support of your neighborhood running around shouting ‘Kill the Nazis!’ ”

—KARPA, SPAIN

“I always thought that it is a total war against fascism, not in a military way. You need to be ready to attack and defend yourself. You have to be prepared, but mainly it’s a cultural struggle because fascism grows up in the working class. We have to be present in the working class, in the student movement, workers’ organization in the community, and build solidarity networks.”

—NICCOLÒ GARUFI, ITALY

“You need broader organization with nonmilitant, nonrevolutionary people to isolate and fight the fascists, but if you do have a militant group of Nazis operating in your city of course you need to organize a more confrontational group to protect people.”

—DAG, NORWAY

“Take seriously all that goes into organizing…create democratic space where people can get involved for the first time…create a culture of solidarity and respect.”

—KIERAN, MINNEAPOLIS

“Sometimes you need a solid group that will be working for years. Sometimes you look for a small group of activists for one action. Sometimes you have to work underground, anonymously, especially in small cities overwhelmed by a hatred towards minorities—in school, on the

street, from the local authorities. Sometimes you can work openly, and advocate for oppressed groups uncovered."

—K, POLAND

"A group should have a clear view what they would like to achieve, e.g., increase awareness in the community about discrimination, make a specific topic visible in the media, reveal identities of the local neo-Nazi gang members."

—K, POLAND

"Everybody who's targeted by fascists should have a way to be involved, though not necessarily in every action."

—KRISTIN, TORONTO

"We strongly recommend against antifa groups being organized using the open, public model of most contemporary activism because of the risk of infiltration. If an emergency situation—such as responding to a fascist public event—calls for public meetings and a traditional mass organizing activist model, this should be kept separate from the long-term group structure."

—IT'S GOING DOWN[449]

"One extreme option is to function as a group but not give yourself a name, and not tell fellow activists what you are doing. Once you have a name, fascists will try to figure out 'who is in the group.' Not having a public face makes your actions even more anonymous."

—IT'S GOING DOWN

INTELLIGENCE

“Do your research. One the most effective things you can do as an anti-fascist is understand your opponent, know where they meet, how they organize. Then be effective in how you disrupt them.”

—JIM, U.K.

“Understand which resources the Far-Right have, gather personal and public information about where they live, work, what they do, which ideas are spread in their societies—to be able to react in the same scale.”

—YAN, RUSSIA

“Anti-fascism must be intelligence-led…you cannot do anti-fascism in the abstract…learn what they’re doing, what they’re talking about, know which groups to destroy, learn about their internal frictions, work on them, leverage them, divide and conquer.”

—PAUL BOWMAN, U.K.

“See how racism or fascism or other forms of oppression are playing out in your community because it’s not going to look the same from one city to the next.”

—WALTER TULL, MONTREAL

SECURITY

“Take security seriously…the heat is real, so it is important to make choices about where your energy is best spent.”

—HOWIE, NEW JERSEY

“Learn how to be secure online.”

—IGGY, ATLANTA

“Start self-defense and weapons training immediately because you are confronting people with militarized training…they are prepared for street battle.”

—MAYA, TEXAS

“Get in shape…even though there may not be street fighting at this time, the alt-right encourages their people to get in shape, and go shooting. Take self-defense classes and learn how to use guns if you’re comfortable doing so.”

—IGGY, ATLANTA

“Protect yourself and your group from Nazis and repression: anonymity—make it impossible for the police or Nazis to trace your individual or collective activities.”

—CAMILLE, FRANCE

“Insofar as it’s possible, antifa members need to keep a low profile, hide their identities when organizing, and not be overly public about who is in the group, where they live, what the groups plans are, etc. The Far Right has a penchant for targeting individual members of antifa groups; so safety should always be a top priority. To that end, any public displays of antifa organizing should be done with faces, and identifying body marks (tattoos, birth marks, etc.) covered as much as possible.”

—ANTIFA NEBRASKA

“It’s encouraging to see lifestyle support for antifascism…but at the same time there’s a risk to claiming that for yourself…if you’re doing anti-fascist stuff publicly, it might make sense not to use the term ‘antifa.’ ”

—IAN, NEW YORK CITY

“Many don’t realize that the visible anti-fascist symbolism is basically code for ‘fight us with knives’…people don’t want to be caught out wearing some of that stuff out in the wrong cities.”

—JACK, BOSTON

TACTICS

“Keep an open mind about tactics and organization to deal with situations as they occur.”

—MURRAY, BALTIMORE

“Avoid macho traps. It’s not about who’s toughest…act with numbers to minimize risk.”

—LUÍS, GERMANY, U.S.A.

“People have to be much more about ‘full spectrum antifascism’ in choosing the most effective tactics without fetishizing violence…the most important thing is winning.”

—PAUL BOWMAN, U.K.

“It’s not a game show called ‘Who’s the toughest antifascist?’ All methods complement each other…the guys who fight fascism cannot exist without a theory which is written by those at home writing.”

—GEORG, GERMANY

“All groups have to consider how to fund-raise. Participating in any local social centre helps with booking rooms for fund-raising events but monies can be raised by collection boxes in bookshops, stalls at friendly political meetings and cultural events or organising fund-raising gigs.”

—ANTI-FASCIST NETWORK, U.K.[450]

“Prepare legal support ahead of time; make sure you know a lawyer who is willing to represent anyone who is arrested…Get used to doing political prisoner support.”

—IT’S GOING DOWN

“Don’t give fascists easy victories…it emboldens them…we have canceled mobilizations when we’re greatly outnumbered…you need to pick your battles.”

—LUÍS, GERMANY, U.S.A.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS

“Get rid of your ego.”

—MAYA, TEXAS

“Have honest discussions about successes and failures.”

—XTN, CHICAGO

“Create a culture of support with each other…so people can be honest about their capacity.”

—MEMBER OF RCA, PORTLAND

“Solidarity is also about supporting ‘your’ people so be sure they are fine; if not, think what can you do instead of pushing them into acting regardless of the circumstances. Antifa is a state of mind, a way of reflecting and critical thinking (also about ourselves), not about black clothes and martial arts.”

—M, POLAND

“The biggest talkers are the fastest to flip on others…be wary of those who brag about antifa.”

—MEMBER OF RCA, PORTLAND

“Work on internalized white supremacy.”

—MAYA, TEXAS

“Keep an open mind about different opinions and don’t try to impose your opinion…create together through consensus.”

—DANIEL, SPAIN

“Avoid people who want to be celebrities and are driven by approval… value people who are quiet, get work done, and are cooperative.”

—MEMBER OF RCA, PORTLAND

“If someone is more interested in recruiting people to their own group than doing anti-fascist work, get rid of them.”

—IT’S GOING DOWN

“Ideally, you want a diverse squad with members who have different talents. Some folks will be best used on the front lines in confrontations (usually strong, fit people who can fight if need be), some folks need to be really good with intel gathering (monitoring right-wing pages, doxxing, etc.), some folks need to be good at graphic design for flyer campaigns, some folks need to be well-versed in security culture, etc. The more diverse your organization is, the better equipped it will be at effectively organizing and staying safe.”

—BRETT, NEBRASKA

“Be patient and regulate your emotions.”

—ERIK D., MINNESOTA

“Be particularly vigilant against anyone who attempts to pressure young or new members to carry out actions that might put them in unnecessary danger. This is a classic provocateur move with the potential to bring a group down.”

—IT’S GOING DOWN

“Learn about gender, sexuality, body ability—do not create more exclusive militant groups; this is not what antifa means for everybody.”

—M, POLAND

APPENDIX B:

SELECT WORKS ON NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN ANTI-FASCISM

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